

Heroes in Dark Times



Saints and Officials Tackling Disaster (16th-17th Centuries)

*edited by
Milena Viceconte, Gennaro Schiano
and Domenico Cecere*



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tel. 06 84 17 758
fax 06 85 35 39 60
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Introduction

Over recent decades, research and debate on catastrophes of natural origin have drawn increasing attention to the cultural and social aspects of disasters in various disciplinary fields. Earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, fires and eruptions have been interpreted from a social perspective, as events that furnish a photographic negative illustrating the culture and imagery of the time when they take place. These sudden and unexpected events lift the veil on everyday reality. On the one hand, they reveal the way people live, how they imagine life and death, how they display their fears and deal with them. On the other hand, they also show the capacity of political and religious institutions to predict and prevent such events and address the crises deriving from them.

The social dimension of these exceptional events, the impact they have on communities and the disorientation they cause is matched by a similarly exceptional need to tell the story and spread the news of them. The natural disasters that took place in the territories of the Hispanic Monarchy in the early modern era triggered publications in a range of genres, including treatises, *relaciones de sucesos*, *avvisi*, chronicles, hagiographies and poems. Such texts began to circulate within and beyond the Empire immediately after the event and, despite their diversity, contributed to the spread of recurrent *topoi* and common stylistic and rhetorical features. Unlike other types of news – for instance, retailing the exploits of commanders in battle, the magnificent processional entries into cities of princes and governors, the mythicised births and deaths of royalty – in the accounts of disaster, it seemed as though the heroes were missing, replaced by the anthropomorphic rage of the natural elements. Nevertheless, it did sometimes happen that singular

figures emerged from the blurry mass of the people and their dramatic anecdotes, and sprang into action to address the emergency. Sometimes they were saints, and sometimes local institutions: the former were invoked to mediate with heaven to placate divine anger through miracles, and the latter to manage the catastrophe and to provide aid and relief.

The chapters in this volume reflect on this composite phenomenon of salvific actions, especially when they take on the character of heroic gestures suspended between reality and fiction, human and divine, ordinary and extraordinary. To do so, the authors have addressed complex and clearly interdisciplinary fields of study, ranging from the history of sanctity and of cults to that of communication and propaganda.

On the one hand, many of the chapters take into account the amazing continuity between the characteristics of ancient heroism and those of Christian sanctity. The exemplary lives and deaths of the martyrs and the prodigious exploits of the warrior saints appear to figuratively represent the features of an ancestral heroism dating back to the warrior cult anchored in myth and legend. As is known, this continuity evolved over time, and not only through mutable definitions of orthodoxy or heterodoxy, nor solely in times of the maximum codification of Reformation or Counter-Reformation decrees. It developed, rather, through the sedimentation and rooting of largely popular forms and practices of worship that, within the communities and the places in which they emerged, revived a timeless prodigious action formerly entrusted to protector heroes by transferring it to the veneration of patron saints. The disaster narratives make it possible to trace and analyse some of the topical elements of this continuity. The recurrence of catastrophes and the patently local dimension of their consequences cast light on the construction of cults and votive practices over time, and the way that these were linked to the sites and memory of the resident communities. Further, the extraordinary nature of moments of catastrophe makes it possible to reflect on the different entities of invocation and miraculous intervention, which refer not only to the topical intercession of the deities but also to the interpretation of the disaster as a breach in the relation between God and man. Thus, the sites, bodies, relics and subjects of the epiphanies and miracles play a fundamental role in the representation of the sacred intervention and its heroic connotations.

The authors of these chapters are well aware of the lengthy persistence of certain phenomena of devotion and of specific representative models

of the miraculous event. Indeed, even societies very remote in time and space appear to have demonstrated similar behaviour in the face of exceptional and tragic events that are difficult to explain. Research has shown that, in different societies and cultures sorely tried by wars, epidemics or other kinds of calamity, there emerges a growing expectation of exceptional individuals or events capable of freeing the community from its suffering, illness, misery and grief. This happened even in the relatively secularised Kingdom of Italy during the Great War, when the bloody conflict in its final phases was compared by Christian men and women to a collective calvary that would be followed by a redemption. At that exceptional time of collective sensitivity, there was a great need of the sacred, and people began to wait and hope for a saint who could put an end to the terrible ordeal of soldiers and civilians, transforming suffering into collective salvation.¹

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that similar dynamics emerged in early modern societies, especially those in the territories of the Hispanic Monarchy, dominated by the Catholic faith that permeated almost every sphere of communal life. When such societies were threatened or struck by extreme natural phenomena that were difficult to foresee, explain and defend against, it came “naturally” to individuals, groups and institutions to invoke the aid of Our Lady or a saint. The common need for protection and reassurance channelled devotion towards figures that were considered capable of interceding with God to bring about an exceptional, supernatural defence. What contributed to the fame of sanctity in the eyes of the faithful were not so much the moral virtues or intellectual qualities of the saint, but rather a series of supernatural qualities generically defined as “heroic virtue” and the ability to work miracles or wonders.² From the believers’ perspective, the saints’ chief mandate was hence to communicate directly with God to obtain protection and favours, thus defending the faithful from the threats looming over them and the catastrophes that caused grief and suffering to individuals and the collective.

1. See Sergio Luzzatto, *Padre Pio: Miracles and Politics in a Secular Age*, New York, Picador, 2011 (or. ed., *Padre Pio. Miracoli e politica nell’Italia del Novecento*, Turin, Einaudi, 2007).

2. Jean-Michel Sallmann, “Sainteté et société”, in *Santità, culti, agiografia. Temi e prospettive*, ed. by Sofia Boesch Gajano, Rome, Viella, 1997, pp. 327-340; Pierluigi Giovannucci, “Genesi e significato di un concetto agiologico: la virtù eroica nell’età moderna”, *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia*, 58/2 (2004), pp. 433-478.

This is the reason why, since the very first centuries of the Christian era, the lives of the saints frequently mention miracles and acts of salvation that took place after earthquakes, eruptions, epidemics and other calamities. In the early modern period, the Church of Rome vigorously promoted reconstructions and narrations of the extraordinary lives and actions of the saints, while at the same time strictly monitoring them for adherence to the new models of sanctity established by the Counter-Reformation. For around 200 years, starting from the 1540s, intensive hagiographic activity stimulated by anti-Protestant polemic led to the promotion of cults of universal or supralocal scope, frequently connected with the great religious orders. Saints such as Filippo Neri, Francis Borja, Francis Xavier, Vincent Ferrer or the less well-known Emygdius were invoked as protectors against earthquakes and epidemics in different parts of the Hispanic Monarchy. This indicates the lively circulation of certain cults and their capacity to adapt to local contexts, as well as the active promotion and exportation of forms of devotion carried out by religious orders and other ecclesiastical bodies. Nevertheless, hagiography linked to a local, civic or regional dimension also survived, and in some cases managed to stand out against the normalising tendency of the post-Tridentine Church – when not actually opposing it, albeit covertly – upholding the validity of traditional devotions threatened by this trend.³

Among the many types of miracles attributed to saints, those performed at the time of disasters share a distinctive feature: the collective nature of the actions undertaken to defend the community of the faithful.⁴ According to the accounts recorded in most of the sources, it was indeed the people who – unanimously and as a body – turned to a saint, or more often to Our Lady, for protection. Nevertheless, behind the veil of the images glorifying the concord and harmony of the Christian people, implying the organic unity of the collective in question, the analysis of the sources used in many of the contributions in this volume paints a different picture. It brings to light the frequency of competition and rivalry among institutions and groups and the different ways of conceiving religious devotion or of interpreting the role of saints in the emergency context. A focus on the

3. *Erudizione e devozione. Le Raccolte di Vite dei santi in età moderna e contemporanea*, ed. by Gennaro Luongo, Rome, Viella, 2000.

4. Giulio Sodano, *Il miracolo nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia dell'età moderna. Tra Santi, Madonne, guaritrici e medici*, Naples, Guida, 2010, pp. 61-64, 101.

establishment and spread of new cults also casts light on their social and political relevance, in both a broad and narrow sense. In some cases, the saints are invoked not so much because they are capable of protecting the members of a certain community from the natural environment, but rather because they can defend the social order from the risk of disintegration and subversion triggered by chaos and bewilderment, counteracting dissent and divisive behaviour.

On the other hand, the more strictly political action of the saints in emergency situations brings us to another extremely complex aspect addressed in the chapters that follow: the role of information in the management of power. This is another phenomenon that persisted over time, but it emerged in a particularly marked manner in the centuries of the early modern period when the territories and institutions of the Hispanic Monarchy offered a significant testing ground. As is known, the revolutionary advent of new media and new modes of communication produced an original informational dimension in which the levels of reliability and veracity of the facts were contaminated in an amalgam of official and unofficial news and a meshing of different forms of written information. The conflict between coexisting truths and diverse political interests led the powers that be to impose official versions and authoritative opinions: in other words, to direct the information passing along channels of communication that appeared to evade control.

Since the emergency caused by the catastrophe appeared primarily as a communicative crisis, these calamities furnish valuable evidence of the means, referents and structures of information at the time. They tell us about the reaction times of various institutions and how the know-how and data necessary for intervention were managed and shared. They also tell us a great deal about the pivotal role of narration as an instrument for bolstering endurance in the face of emergency and for reinforcing collective knowledge in the face of the unknown. In the mesh of communication in times of disaster, the ideological function of the *news* assumed new connotations. In effect, institutional powers realised that crises offered an opportunity to legitimise their visions and political projects. In their representation of catastrophe, the ruling powers sought not only to impose authoritative explanations and studies of the causes of the disaster, but also, and more importantly, testimonies of trust that placed the emphasis on the decisions and actions necessary to alleviate the suffering of the people and to curb the damage provoked by the calamity. The accounts of disaster borrowed

from other types of eulogistic writings comprising an epic narration of the leading exponents of power and their political actions. The heroes of the ruins and rubble assumed the features of warriors immortalised on the battlefield: fearless and generous, they risked their lives for the good of the community. The royals, the court and the vice-regal institutions were indeed accompanied by an array of heroes throughout the catastrophe made up of secondary institutional figures, from noble citizens to friars of the minor orders and members of the populace.

This volume evolved from the symposium organised by the *DisComPoSE* group in January 2021 addressing the topic of saints and officials as heroic figures in times of disaster (*Figure eroiche in tempi calamitosi. Santi e istituzioni nella rappresentazione dei disastri. Secoli XVI-XVIII*). The purpose of these discussions (which were organised as online meetings due to pandemic restrictions) was to consider figures who assumed heroic attributes during times of emergency and to reflect on the various interpretative issues underlying the memory of their actions. The comparison between various case studies turned out to be particularly useful as regards the printed sources, enabling identification of the common rhetorical devices used in the different types of publication that gave news of an event, and the relation of such genres to the stylistic features of coeval literature. Special attention was also paid to the figurative evidence representing the heroic action, and to the process of reutilising and adapting particular iconographic solutions in different contexts of crisis. Further, the investigations carried out on official sources connected with secular and religious institutions identified traces of contradictory narrations and the political reasons behind such conflicts. These include, for instance, the symbolic function and cultural impact of religious processions and the intersecting mandates and powers of the different institutions that they brought to light.

The chapters in the first section focus on composite informative texts and on occasional poetry generated by the disasters. These contributions clearly illustrate the permeability between cultural levels in early modern European literature, showing how this paved the way for the appearance of texts of hybrid genre and editorial features. Portrayal of the mediation of the saints and the heroic exploits of institutions and illustrious figures in communities struck by catastrophes appeared to be forged in this cultural melange, drawing largely on both the *topoi* of high-brow literature and the rhetoric of minor traditional and popular literary genres. As a result,

the linguistic and rhetorical structures, themes, forms, genres and formats chosen to depict the actions of the heroes of salvation – both celestial and terrestrial – do not merely reconstruct one of the foundational reasons for the narration but also show how this can lift a veil on the societies and cultures from which the narration emerged.

Annachiara Monaco's chapter addresses the media impact of the eruption of Vesuvius in 1631 by focusing on the circulation of the disaster in the *relazioni* published in Italian both in Naples and in other parts of Italy. As she argues, "The eruption also triggered an authentic 'editorial explosion' of vast scope that marked a watershed moment in the perception and management of disasters in the Kingdom". Her contribution reconstructs the stylistic strategies and narrative choices adopted to represent both the dramatic reactions of the population and the salvific intervention of the institutions – chiefly Viceroy Monterrey and Archbishop Boncompagni – and the miraculous action of the saints, especially St Gennaro.

Maite Iraceburu Jiménez has chosen to explore the presence of God in the Spanish *relaciones de sucesos* dealing with catastrophes of natural origin. More specifically, she investigates the various lexical-discursive strategies the authors of these informative texts used to represent the different expressions of God's action and of his "hand" during times of disaster. While, from a lexical perspective, God's action is primarily manifested through the paired poles of wrath and mercy, in adjectival terms, the epic attributes of divine intervention are expressed through a widescale use of the superlatives that were, moreover, characteristic of the imaginary of the *relaciones*. Also remarkable is the striking presence of iterative structures and repeated discourse, illustrating both the emphatic aspect of such informative texts, conceived to stress the tragic tone of the event, and also the persistence of oral structures widely employed in the circulation of news by word of mouth.

The incomplete and only surviving printed copy of the *Llanto de Menardo* by Duarte Núñez de Acosta describes it as a *relación*. However, although it indeed recounts the flooding of the Tormes river between 26 and 27 January 1626, it does so through the grief of a young shepherd that adopts the features of a pastoral lament typical of the bucolic genre. At the sight of the prodigious apparition of a statue of the Virgin Mary miraculously saved from the raging waters, the young shepherd launches into a dramatic invocation, after which, convinced of obtaining an end to the tragedy, he also concludes his lament. The aim of Gennaro Schiano's

contribution is to explore how, through the hesitant voice of the shepherd, Duarte's poem develops a particularly striking representation of the Virgin's salvific intervention. The selection of Marian epithets reworked in the eulogy, and the symbolic parallel between the prodigious arrival of the statue and the augured support of the deity, offer an incisive rendering of the Virgin's canonical mediating action between heaven and earth.

Antonio Perrone considers instead the representation of disaster in the Baroque poetry of southern Italy, dealing in particular with the actions of historical and mythical figures called upon to address exceptional events. He discusses the texts in chronological order, starting with two sonnets by Antonio de' Rossi on the Masaniello revolt of 1647, two sonnets by Biagio Cusano on the miracle of St Gennaro and an ode by Giacomo Lubrano on the 1656 plague epidemic in the Kingdom of Naples. These texts reveal two important features of the representation of catastrophe in lyric poetry. The first is the mediatisation process implemented by 17th-century culture in relation to the Spanish Crown and local institutions. The second is the eminently conventional quality of catastrophe narration. By analysing the selected poems, Perrone aims to explain how a media instrument – Baroque lyric poetry – can manipulate reality to achieve political ends.

The second section then turns to the pivotal role played by devotional images in the process of promoting divine heroic agents and their prodigious actions against environmental catastrophes. Specific contributions deal with the development of sacred iconographies in Cagliari, Naples, Spain and Iberian America, the success of which was tightly bound up with the impetus of certain Marian cults and the championing of saints proclaimed by the local communities as specific defenders against meteorological catastrophes, disasters at sea and volcanic phenomena.

The cult of St Vincent Ferrer as an efficacious mediator in times of infectious disease is an exemplary case of enduring devotion. This topic is addressed by José Ortiz, who reconstructs the significant stages in the consolidation of this veneration over time in France and Spain, illustrating the way it has been revived every time an epidemiological catastrophe emerged, not least during the recent pandemic emergency. As regards the intercession of Our Lady, the miraculous intervention connected with seaports or settlements situated close to rivers appears to be particularly striking in terms of the supernatural force displayed at times of storms and floods. The case of the Madonna di Bonaria is particular in that it was

immediately established as a cult identified with the seafarers of Cagliari but went on to assume a transversal character, spreading to Seville and even to Hispanic America. This is why two separate contributions have been devoted to this cult, respectively by Ramon Dilla and Sara Caredda, whose reflections consider the role images played in the repurposing and adaptation of the cult in places distant from the sanctuary in which it originated.

Another aspect of the greatest interest in the study of this subject is the literary and figurative evidence that gave visibility to the actions of political figures. Although, as earthly men, they were clearly not equipped with supernatural powers, they nevertheless distinguished themselves by actions that were deemed heroic and hence worthy of being celebrated by the chroniclers and artists of the time. Based on such considerations, Milena Viceconte's chapter proposes a rereading of several textual and visual sources of marked propagandist intentions. These are seen to glorify the figure of the Viceroy of Naples during the tragic days of December 1631, marked by the intense eruptive activity of Vesuvius. This disaster is remembered primarily because, as is known, it was the event that consecrated St Gennaro as the paladin of the people of Naples against the baleful volcano and that consolidated the images seen as archetypes of heroic iconography in times of catastrophe.

The third section focuses on the political and social dynamics underlying the recognition of certain miracles, the promotion of certain cults and the glorification of certain figures who are presented with heroic features. Some of the chapters reconstruct processes of exchange between various territories of the Hispanic Monarchy in order to analyse phenomena of revival or the repurposing of the cults of saints and protectors who – at specific times or in an ongoing manner – were acknowledged as defenders against particular types of disaster. The analysis does not stop at the evolution and spread of the devotions, but brings to light the political and cultural strategies of the ecclesiastical and secular institutions, religious orders, social classes and family groups that were behind the promotion of these cults. The aim is also to investigate in what way and why a certain individual or action was presented or recognised as an effective defence against a threat of vast scope originating from the natural environment.

The connections between devotion and social-political relations in the urban environment are at the heart of the contribution by Beatriz Álvarez

García. She investigates the news and rumours that circulated in Seville and throughout Spain in the wake of the floods that struck the city on various occasions in the course of the 17th century. Her analysis of the religious aspects featured in the *relaciones de sucesos* brings to light the “heroic dualism” of the civil and ecclesiastic authorities. This dualism does not result in outright conflict, but rather builds a shared memory of the events, promoting the salvific role of the local patron saints Justa and Rufina, and exalting the participation of the city elites in religious processions. This helps restore the social order threatened by the confusion and disorientation caused by the disastrous floods.

The urban dimension with its rivalries and conflicts is also central to Valeria Enea’s study of the promotion of certain forms of devotion in Palermo in the wake of the earthquake that razed the cities of eastern Sicily to the ground in 1693. In this case, however, the more or less concealed local conflicts are more clearly meshed with the supralocal circulation of cults and the persistence of local devotions, the ambitions of the powerful religious orders and the aspirations of leading aristocratic dynasties. Analysis of the actions of the viceroy and the city senate, archbishop, the Jesuits and other religious orders in the wake of the disaster brings to light the processes of construction or revival of local cults (such as that of St Rosalia) and cults that originated in other parts of the Hispanic Monarchy (such as that of St Francis Borja) as well as the repurposing of devotion in the capital of the Kingdom of Sicily at the end of the 17th century.

Flavia Tudini’s investigation hinges on the coexistence of earthly and heavenly heroes, exploring the news and reports of the Lima earthquake of 1687 sent to Madrid by the viceroy and representatives of ecclesiastical and secular institutions. These texts illustrate the citizens’ reactions of a religious-devotional nature, materialising in numerous processions and devotions to the images of the saints, Our Lady and Christ that had withstood the tremors. Among these images, the one that took on the greatest symbolic meaning was the *Cristo de los Milagros*. The city institutions and viceroy described how they had reacted promptly and decisively to the catastrophe, implementing exceptional relief and reconstruction measures. The chapter therefore highlights the rhetorical strategies conceived to exalt the heroic figure of the viceroy, the Duke de la Palata, in the face of catastrophe, as well as the search for an otherworldly hero, identified in the *Cristo de los Milagros*.

The study by Gennaro Varriale, on the other hand, explores the accounts of miracles from the global perspective of the Hispanic Monarchy. He reviews the evidence that emerged at the time of the various earthquakes that took place over the course of almost two centuries in different parts of the empire, including the Andes, Spain, the Kingdom of Naples and the Philippines. The chapter draws on both administrative correspondence and the direct evidence of survivors and eyewitnesses that confirms the efficacy of the intervention of Our Lady and the saints in placating divine wrath. Varriale also casts light on the analogies between the different hierophanic episodes and the chronological continuity of certain models of miraculous intervention, despite the diversity of contexts and the intervening transformations in religious sensitivity and the regulation of devotion.

The evidence of survivors is the chief documentary basis for the contribution of Marco Papisidero, who studies the case of a small city in Sicily where the inhabitants were involved in the construction of a cult. In the aftermath of the plague of 1624, which had claimed a relatively small number of victims, the citizens were summoned to give testimony about the protection provided by the patron saint, Angelus. The chapter analyses the way in which the witnesses attribute the averted danger to the saint's intervention, giving rise to a specific tradition regarding the outbreak of the infection and its evolution. Interpretation of the evidence shows clearly that the witnesses were convinced that the saint saved the city by "taking upon himself" the potential damage that would have been caused to the inhabitants.

Finally, the study of Manuel Luna Cruz offers an interesting appendix for reflection, bringing the topic of the heroes of disaster into the realm of digital humanities. It starts from the contribution of geolocation and mapping to the reconstruction of the circulation of news in the early modern period, concentrating on the communication flow triggered by catastrophes of natural origin.

To conclude the introductory pages to this volume, we would first like to thank all of the participants in the *DisComPoSE* project, whose research has stimulated and supported the subject of study, and especially Giancarlo Alfano, Chiara De Caprio and Francesco Montuori. We are also grateful for the ever-helpful advice and generous support of Elisabetta Scirocco.

Sincere thanks are due to the symposium participants, including Eva Belén Carro Carbajal, who unfortunately could not contribute to the

volume. We also acknowledge the discussants, Francisco Baena Sánchez, Massimo Cattaneo, Stefano D'Ovidio, Flavia Gherardi, Francisco Montes González, Valentina Nider, Pasquale Palmieri and Nieves Pena Sueiro for having stimulated fruitful debate, collaborating generously in the improvement of the research proposed in the various contributions.

Finally, a heartfelt thanks also to Françoise Lavocat and Gerhard Wolf, tutelary deities of the symposium, which they graced with their presence and their masterful addresses.

*Milena Viceconte
Gennaro Schiano
Domenico Cecere*

I

Conventions and Topoi

ANNACHIARA MONACO

People, Institutions and Saints: A Linguistic Analysis of *Relazioni* on the 1631 Eruption of Vesuvius*

1. *The perception and narration of the disaster*

Recent research into the impact of natural catastrophes on the societies of the past has cast light on the profound and ramified relationship between disasters and the narratives concerning them. Analysis of these narratives helps us understand how such societies responded to calamities and reconstruct the interpretative strategies employed to mould the memory of the catastrophe. Over the course of the early modern era, natural disasters assumed a growing political, social and cultural importance. The way they were managed and represented attracted considerable attention inside and outside the corridors of power.¹ Political and religious authorities encouraged the production of increasingly detailed reports, designed to illustrate the procedures adopted to remedy the damage caused by the disaster.² These accounts were frequently included in publications aimed at a broad readership, especially in the editorial genre of the reports known as *relazioni*.

* This work was supported by the *DisComPoSE* project (*Disasters, Communication and Politics in Southwestern Europe*), which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No. 759829).

1. *Pestes, incendies, naufrages. Écriture du désastre au dix-septième siècle*, ed. by Françoise Lavocat, Turnhout, Brepols, 2011; Françoise Lavocat, "Narratives of Catastrophe in the Early Modern Period: Awareness of Historicity and Emergence of Interpretative Viewpoints", *Poetics Today*, 33/3 (2012), pp. 253-299; *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture*, ed. by Domenico Cecere, Chiara De Caprio, Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Pasquale Palmieri, Rome, Viella, 2018.

2. Lavocat, "Narratives of Catastrophe", p. 255.

Relazioni were short- or medium-length texts published in small format, conceived to inform, entertain and convince the reader. This type of report was not restricted to disasters but also addressed other kinds of events, such as wars, geographical discoveries, violent crimes, the apparition of monsters or of comets, and so on.³ The *relazioni* were an important instrument of propaganda and control of public opinion by lay and ecclesiastical institutions. They exploited what Laura Ricci has defined as a skilful combination of enjoyment and manipulation, capturing the reader's attention while at the same time steering the interpretation of the event described.⁴ Moving along the same lines, considering the *relazioni* dealing with prodigious and bloody events, Alberto Natale has emphasised how they were intended to instruct the populace, comparing them to the moral and spiritual lessons embodied in mediaeval *exempla*.⁵

Based on these premises, this chapter examines several such *relazioni* that deal with natural disasters, aiming to analyse the stylistic strategies and narrative choices the authors adopted to represent the reactions and ways in which the catastrophes were managed by the populations affected. More specifically, the focus is on a series of *relazioni* published in Italian

3. Less attention has been devoted to the *relazioni* by Italian scholars than by those in other academic contexts. For instance, on that of Spain, see Gennaro Schiano, *Relatar la catástrofe en el Siglo de Oro. Entre noticia y narración*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2021. In the Italian panorama, mention should be made of the studies of a historical slant of Mario Infelise (*Prima dei giornali. Alle origini della pubblica informazione (secoli XVI e XVII)*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2002, pp. 122-153), those of Alberto Natale from a literary perspective (*Gli specchi della paura. Il sensazionale e il prodigioso nella letteratura di consumo (secoli XVII-XVIII)*, Rome, Carocci, 2008), and the historical-linguistic research of Raymund Wilhelm (*Italienische Flugschriften des Cinquecento (1500-1550): Gattungsgeschichte Und Sprachgeschichte*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1996) and Laura Ricci ("La lingua degli avvisi a stampa (secolo XVI)", in *Scrivere il volgare fra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, ed. by Nadia Cannata and Maria Antonietta Grignani, Pisa, Pacini, 2009, pp. 97-114; Laura Ricci, *Paraletteratura*, Rome, Carocci, 2014, pp. 35-39). On the *relazioni* dealing with natural disasters in particular, see the historical-linguistic contributions of Chiara De Caprio, "Narrating Disasters: Writers and Texts Between Historical Experience and Narrative Discourse", in *Disaster Narratives*, pp. 19-40; Rita Fresu, "The Water Ran with Such Force. The Representation of Floods in the Early Modern Era: Textual Configurations, Conceptual Models, Linguistic Aspects", in *Disaster Narratives*, pp. 73-89, Francesco Montuori, "Voices of the *totale eccidio*: On the Lexicon of Earthquakes in the Kingdom (1456-1784)", in *Disaster Narratives*, pp. 41-72.

4. Ricci, "La lingua degli avvisi a stampa", p. 107.

5. Natale, *Gli specchi della paura*, p. 19.

following the eruption of Vesuvius in 1631. This event offers particularly fertile ground for investigation in view of the enormous impact it had in political, social, cultural and communicative terms on the Kingdom of Naples, and also on the rest of Italy and Europe as a whole.⁶ To begin, a few brief details about the actual eruption are useful.

After 500 years of inactivity, at dawn on 16 December 1631 Vesuvius erupted, devastating the slopes of the volcano and killing at least 4,000 people.⁷ The extraordinary nature of this event was related not only to the material damage caused, but also to the eruptive history of the volcano. Unlike the earthquakes that had struck the territories of the kingdom with a certain regularity, the eruption of 1631 was totally unexpected by the Neapolitans since the long dormancy of the volcano had quelled any sense of danger and the region was considered attractive and fertile.⁸ The novelty of the eruption, and the damage it caused, generated a sense of wonder, but also a sudden change in the way Vesuvius was perceived. As Giancarlo Alfano has observed, it brought about a “reconfiguration” of the urban space of Naples in the direction of Vesuvius and the creation of a new, legendary image of the city: a sweeping blue bay over which the smoking Vesuvius loomed.⁹

The eruption also triggered an authentic “editorial explosion” of vast scope that marked a watershed moment in the perception and

6. On the connection between disasters and narrations in relation to the Kingdom of Naples, see De Caprio, “Narrating Disasters”, and Montuori, “Voices of the *totale eccidio*”.

7. Giovanni Gugg, “The Missing Ex-Voto: Anthropology and Approach to Devotional Practices during the 1631 Eruption of Vesuvius”, in *Disaster Narratives*, pp. 221-238: 221.

8. For instance, note the description of Nicolò Maria Oliva, one of the chroniclers of the event: “Siede vicino Napoli una montagna per grandezza mirabile, per amenità di sito delitiosissima, per temperie d’aria da moltissimi habitata, per fecondità di terreno tale che di frutti, vini e d’altre cose all’humano vitto necessarie, come begnigna madre abbondante e copiosa, mantiene la città di Napoli”. See Nicolò Maria Oliva, *Lettera del signor Nicolò Maria Oliva, scritta all’illustriss. Sig. abbate d. Flavio Ruffo, nella quale dà vera e minuta relatione delli segni, terremoti e incendio del monte Vesuvio, cominciando dalli 10 del mese di dicembre 1631 per insito alli 5 di gennaro*, Naples, Lazzaro Scoriggio, 1632, f. A2ra.

9. Giancarlo Alfano, “The Portrait of Catastrophe: The Image of the City in Seventeenth-Century Neapolitan Culture”, in *Disaster Narratives*, pp. 147-162: 151. He points out that it was precisely this event that shifted attention away from the sites on the western side, on which the city had for centuries assembled and moulded its baggage of history and memory, including the tomb of Virgil on the hill of Posillipo, the Solfatara of Pozzuoli, Lake Avernus and the Cave of the Cumaean Sibyl. See p. 153.

management of disasters in the Kingdom.¹⁰ In the aftermath of the catastrophe, the people of Naples had to deal not only with fear, but also with a formidable circulation of information and rumours. The *incendio* of 1631 kindled an enormous communication flow that swept through all levels of society, including those that normally did not have access to the channels of information restricted to the institutions and the city elite.¹¹ More specifically, exploiting the elusive nature of manuscripts and speech, conflicting opinions and predictions about the causes and dire consequences of the eruption began to circulate. Meshing with forms of discontent and political dissent,¹² these gradually became so strong that they could no longer be contained only by the use of “coercive and repressive measures”.¹³ This forced the institutions to enter the fray in an attempt to steer public opinion by means of a massive information campaign in print designed to extol their own efforts.¹⁴

10. On the extensive production of written works dealing with the eruption, especially those in print, I refer here only to the two main bibliographies of Luigi Riccio, “Nuovi documenti sull’Incendio vesuviano dell’anno 1631 e bibliografia di quella eruzione”, *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, 14 (1889), pp. 489-555, and Friedrich Furchheim, *Bibliografia del Vesuvio. Compilata e corredata di note critiche estratte dai più autorevoli scrittori vesuviani*, Naples, E. Prass, 1897.

11. See Domenico Cecere, “Informare e stupire. Racconti di calamità nella Napoli del XVII secolo”, in *L’Europa moderna e l’antico Vesuvio. Sull’identità scientifica italiana tra i secoli XVII e XVIII. Atti del Seminario internazionale di Studi (Fisciano 15 settembre 2015)*, ed. by Alfonso Tortora, Domenico Cassano and Sean Cocco, Battipaglia, Lavegliacarlone, 2017, pp. 63-77; Domenico Cecere, “Moralising Pamphlets: Calamities, Information and Propaganda in Seventeenth-Century Naples”, in *Disaster Narratives*, pp. 129-145; Lorenza Gianfrancesco, “Vesuvio e società: informazione, propaganda e dibattito intellettuale a Napoli nel primo Seicento”, in *Napoli e il Gigante. Il Vesuvio tra immagine, scrittura e memoria*, ed. by Rosa Casapullo and Lorenza Gianfrancesco, Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino, 2014, pp. 55-91; Lorenza Gianfrancesco, “Narrative and Representation of a Disaster in Early Seventeenth-Century Naples”, in *Disaster Narratives*, pp. 163-186.

12. Gianfrancesco, “Vesuvio e società”, pp. 63-64 cites, for instance, the evidence of the Venetian ambassador in Naples, Marcantonio Padavino, who, in a letter addressed to the Venetian senate, describes the pasting-up of a pasquinade in which the cause of the eruption is attributed to the avidity and larceny of the viceroy and his officials at the expense of the citizens.

13. Cecere, “Informare e stupire”, p. 64.

14. On the impact of the commissioners on the promotion and control of the activities of the chroniclers, publishers and printers, see Gianfrancesco, “Vesuvio e società”, pp. 70-75, 88-91; Gianfrancesco, “Narrative and Representation”, pp. 172-173.

Against this backdrop, the *relazioni* drafted and printed in the weeks following the disaster offer a perfect case study for an exploration of the linguistic strategies used to describe how the catastrophe was addressed and overcome within the community.¹⁵ A comparison of the texts brings to light three main topics: the reactions of the population, the actions of the institutions and the role of saints in response to collective or individual devotion. These are the subjects of the following sections of analysis.

2. *The effects of the disaster on the population*

In relating the reactions of the population to the disaster, the primary concern of the various chroniclers was to represent the emotional impact of the event. In the works considered, this emerges from the very beginning of the narrations. After recording the arrival of the first quakes, the chroniclers relate the fear that overwhelmed the people living on the slopes of Vesuvius and their flight towards Naples, as in examples 1 and 2.

(1) Non aspettarono le più vicine genti alla falda del monte altro avviso del sovrastante flagello, ma appena i padri e madri i piccoli figli e figlie nelle braccia prendendo, lasciando a bell'agio spalancate le case et altre cose più care, verso Napoli per salvar la vita sen corsero.¹⁶

(2) Fu di tal spavento [viz. il terremoto] che impaurì tutti gli abitanti di diverse terre che circuivano detto monte, in tal guisa che huomini, donne e figliuoli si diedero alla fuga ogn'uno per salvarsi, lasciando casa, robba e quanto havevano. Corsero tutti alla volta di Napoli con pianti e gridi.¹⁷

15. The *relazioni* analysed here were printed mostly in Naples but also in other Italian cities, such as Bari and Venice. In chronological terms, they were all produced within one month of the eruption, before 16 January 1632.

16. Capradosso, *Il lagrimevole avvenimento dell'incendio del monte Vesuvio per la città di Napoli e luoghi adiacenti, nel qual si narra minutamente tutti i successi sino al presente giorno. Del Capradosso agostiniano*, Naples, Egidio Longo, 1631, f. A2r.

17. Giacomo Milesio, *Vera relatione del miserabile e memorabile caso successo nella falda della nominatissima montagna di Somma, altrimenti detta mons Vesuvii, circa sei miglia distante dalla famosissima e gentilissima città di Partenope, detta Napoli, capo del delitiosiss. Regno e patria di Terra di Lavore. Scritta dal R.P.F. Giacomo Milesio da Ponta Hibernese di minori osservanti riformato, habitante nel regio convento della Croce di Palazzo in Napoli*, Naples, Domenico Maccarano, 1631, f. π1v.

As these passages show, the first element that makes the account dramatic is the reference to loved ones, especially members of the family.¹⁸ Note, for instance, the noun pairs “i padri e madri i piccoli figli e figlie” (“the fathers and mothers the little sons and daughters”) (1), and the ternary series “huomini, donne e figliuoli” (“men, women and children”) (2). In this way, the eruption is portrayed not simply as a natural phenomenon of extraordinary dimensions, but also as something that undermines the social structures of the community affected, starting from the most intimate sphere of the family. The emotional and poignant tension is further heightened by the fact that the fugitives are forced to leave all their goods behind. Here, too, enumerative devices are used to articulate the moment of abandoning the dwellings: “lasciando le case et altre cose più care” (“leaving their houses and other most treasured possessions”) (1); “lasciando casa, robba e quanto havevano” (“leaving their homes, things and all they had”) (2).

Comparing the texts, we can detect narrative solutions of greater dramatic emphasis, as seen below:

(3) Et in vero fu atto compassionevole sentire i poveri bambini nelle materne braccia chiedere nutrimento, e non potendo le povere madri darli soccorso, come vicine all’hora estrema, si scapigliavano le chiomi direttamente piangendo su l’amati pegni le loro sciagure. E volendo le miserelle seguire i loro lamenti, interrotte et coperte da subbita caligine e densa nubbe d’infocata cenere, restavan morte, arse e distrutte con gl’innocenti fanciulli. E non meno furono [...] e strida degl’afflitti consorti, ch’eran altrettanto efficaci e lagrimevoli, che non potendo l’uno sovvenire all’altro, con la morte sugl’occhi et in estremo agone, chiedevan perdono di loro colpe al Signore.¹⁹

This passage is a separate paragraph inside the *relazione*, and it begins by stressing the feelings of compassion generated by being able to “sentire” (“hear”) the effects of the eruption on the population. Here, the scene portrayed does not convey the fear and attempted flight of the survivors,

18. The emphasis on bonds of kinship and friendship in order to highlight the emotional dimension of the catastrophic event is a conventional motif in the *relazioni* on disasters. See De Caprio “Narrating Disasters”, p. 39; Rita Fresu, “The Water Ran with Such Force”, p. 86.

19. Scipione Cardassi, *Relatione dell’irato Vesuvio, de suoi fulminanti furori e avvenimenti compassionevoli. Fatta da Scipione Cardassi, detto lo Minimo nell’Accademia dell’Incogniti della città di Bari, al sig. Antonio Carrettone, patritio di detta città*, Bari, Giacomo Gaidone, 1632, pp. 16-17. The lacuna is in the text, available in a single exemplar.

but the despair of those facing death as a result of the relentless hail of ashes. The mothers tear out their hair in distress, distraught with anguish at their imminent end, unable to satisfy their children's need for food. The cries and lamentations of their husbands are equally inconsolable as they helplessly watch their loved ones dying. In addition to the choice of the subject of the scene, from a rhetorical and lexical aspect we can also note how the dramatic emphasis is achieved in particular by the use of anaphors that stress qualities of compassion and tenderness: “i poveri bambini / l'amati pegni / gl'innocenti fanciulli; le povere madri / le miserelle” (“the poor infants / the beloved charges / the innocent children; the poor mothers / the wretched creatures”).²⁰ We can also observe the dittologies – “interrotte et coperte” (“interrupted and stifled”); “efficaci e lagrimevoli” (“forceful and tearful”) – and the adjectival climax “morte, arse e distrutte” (“killed, burned and destroyed”), starkly emphasising the semantic sphere of grief and loss.

When the focus of the narration moves from the areas close to Vesuvius to the city of Naples, we can observe several cases of narrative sequences constructed in a very similar manner, in which the strong and sudden increase in intensity of the earthquakes generates an explosion of terror among the inhabitants, as in the passage below.

(4) Finì il sabbato sudetto con qualche pioggia e l'aria coperta di molti nuvoli, ma la notte oscura accompagnata da moltitudine de venti, e cascorno strepitose piogge: per questo non si scorgeva né monte né fumo. Ma passata mezzanotte venne un terremoto molto terribile, che rinovò i terrori di prima di questa afflitta città, tanto più che passata una mez' hora ne venne un altro più spaventoso, alle 13. hore un altro e poco dopo replicò il quarto. Hor ecco di nuovo i pianti, li sospiri, le grida: le voci si alzavano fino al cielo.²¹

The narrative structure of the passage is built up in such a way as to convey the crescendo of tension generated by the increasing frequency of

20. In the field of textual linguistics, the anaphora is a linguistic device with which the speaker refers to a referent already introduced in the text. See Angela Ferrari, *Linguistica del testo. Principi, fenomeni, strutture*, Rome, Carocci, 2014, pp. 186, 199-200.

21. Angelo De Eugenii, *Il maraviglioso e tremendo incendio del monte Vesuvio, detto a Napoli la Montagna di Somma nel 1631, ove si raccontano distintamente tutte l'attioni e successi in detto monte, suoi luochi adiacenti e a Napoli. Con un discorso metheorologico, o filosofico, dell'effetti naturali che possono haver cagionato questo incendio, notandosi la causa materiale, efficiente e finali. Del M.R.P. frat'Angelo De Eugenii da Perugia, dottor theologo franciscano*, Naples, Ottavio Beltrano, 1631, f. B3v.

the earthquakes during the night. Firstly, the rapid succession of events is indicated in temporal terms by four markers: “il sabato”, “mezzanotte”, “alle 13 hore”, “poco dopo” (“Saturday”, “midnight”, “at 13 hours”, “shortly after”). Second, the increase in intensity of the earthquakes is modulated by the use of different rhetorical-textual devices: the repetition of the connector “ma” (“but”), presenting a situation of increasingly greater instability compared to what appeared in the previous sentence; the intensifying expression “tanto più che” (“all the more so because”); and the repetition of the pronoun “altro” (“another”), referring to the earthquakes. Instead, at a lexical level, the crescendo of the telluric energy is expressed through semantically elative adjectives such as “strepitose”, “terribili”, “spaventoso” (“thunderous”, “terrible”, “frightful”). The passage ends with a presentative sentence introduced by the adverb “ecco”, in which the climax of substantives “i pianti, li sospiri, le grida” (“the weeping, the sighing, the cries”) reproduces the fear that exploded among the Neapolitans, as specified in the following hyperbole, “le voci si alzavano fino al cielo” (“the voices rose to heaven”).

The *relazioni* also give ample space to narration of the numerous penitential rituals in which the entire community came together to invoke divine assistance and forgiveness. As the various chroniclers document, the accentuation of the eruptive phenomena was matched by a corresponding increase in recourse to confession, prayer and participation in processions.²² The processions are portrayed as occasions of authentic collective delirium during which the people appeared to be overwhelmed by intense emotion.²³ See, for example, passages 5 and 6 below.

(5) Riuscì detta processione copiosa di gente già che ogn'uno havea lasciato il negoziare, etiam quelli che con la propria arte campavano: non s'andava a' tribunali, né si vedea per la città poteche o fundachi aperti, ma tutti li nobili come ignobili, mortificati, con gl'occhi a terra, mesti e paurosi, chi vestito di sacco, scalzo e cinto di grosse funi, chi battendosi con atroci flagelli e chi portando su le spalle pesanti croci, gridando, esclamando e piangendo, sequivano detta processione. Ad altro non s'attendea che chieder misericordia al sommo Iddio, già che il popolo si ritrovava in evidente pericolo, oppresso d'infiniti disaggi e circondato d'estrema miseria.²⁴

22. On the anthropological significance of the processions organised during catastrophes, see Gugg, “The Missing Ex-Voto”.

23. Natale, *Gli specchi della paura*, p. 247.

24. Paolo Milano, *Vera relatione del crudele, misero e lacrimoso prodigio successo nel monte Vesuvio, circa otto miglia distante dalla nobilissima e delitiosissima città di*

(6) [...] si vedea in ordinanza distinta infinità di persone di sacco e di cilicio vestite, con corone di spine in testa e con croci, anzi poderosissimi travi nelle spalle, rappresentando diversi misteri de' dolori della Madre di Dio e della Passione di Christo, tra quali era tramezata gran quantità di battenti con sì fiere et acute discipline in mano che erano più le stille del sangue che dalla battuta carne spruzzavano che le gocce dell'acqua che dal torbido cielo scendevano.²⁵

Like the previous examples, these too are characterised by the use of an expressive lexicon and enumerative devices intended to stress the emotional compass of the disaster. More specifically, we can note terms and expressions connected with various semantic fields. For instance, that of damage in the binary sequence, “oppresso d’infiniti disagi e circondato d’estrema miseria” (“oppressed by infinite suffering and surrounded by extreme misery”) (5); that of fear in the dittology “mesti e paurosi” (“downcast and fearful”) (5) and in the descending climax “gridando, esclamando e piangendo” (“shouting, wailing and crying”) (5); and that of expiation, through the introduction of numerous instruments of penitence. Note, in particular, the use of reformulation for corrective-amplificative purposes: “con croci, anzi poderosissimi travi” (“with crosses, or rather ponderous beams”) (6). We can also see how the fervent anxiety for purification culminates in the last example with the hyperbolic image portraying the ferocity with which the flagellants whip themselves: the drops of blood spurting from their wounds are more numerous than the raindrops falling from the sky.

3. Between “*due vigilantissimi pastori*”

In narrative terms, the choices adopted to recount the effects of the disaster on the population are very different from those used to present the action of the institutions. In the case of the eruption of Vesuvius, a primary role is assigned to the principal exponents of the lay and ecclesiastical authorities, Viceroy Monterrey and Archbishop Boncompagni, portrayed

Partenope, detta Napoli. Nella quale brevemente s'esprime quante terre siano per tal'effetto distrutte, quant'hanno patito notabil danno e quante genti siano ivi morte. Con breve descrizione anco quante volte sia successo nei tempi antichi, Naples, Giovan Domenico Roncagliolo, 1632, f. a2v.

25. Capradosso, *Il lagrimevole avvenimento*, f. [A3]v.

as figures who guided and protected the community in addressing the catastrophe. The various chroniclers relate that, when the eruption occurred, Archbishop Boncompagni – who was at Torre del Greco at the time, for reasons of health – returned immediately to Naples to organise prayers and processions, in which the viceroy and his officials also took part. The viceroy organised logistical and practical aid operations: having the roads leading into the city cleared of pyroclastic materials, recovering and accommodating those who had been wounded and arranging for the burial of corpses to prevent an epidemic. Through their actions, the archbishop and viceroy are portrayed as true shepherds, prompt and meticulous in catering respectively to the spiritual and material needs of their flocks, to the extent of being attributed the title of *pater patriae*, used by the Romans to honour the most eminent and worthy members of the state (1).

(1) In questo giorno si poté scorgere più evidentemente la natia prudenza d'amendue i nostri pastori, spirituale e temporale, posciaché l'uno ordinando gl'espediti alla salute dell'anime, l'altro gli rimedii alla salute de' corpi, si mostrarono degni e veri padri della patria.²⁶

(2) Ha però Napoli da rendere devotissime gratie alla divina maestà, la quale havendole destinato così rigoroso flagello ha saputo nell'esecuzione della giustizia framettere gli effetti della sua misericordia in haver provista la città di due vigilantissimi pastori, destinatole uno dalla divina provvidenza di N.S. papa Urbano, et l'altro dal consiglio infallibile di S.M. Cattolica, che dallo spirito di Dio è governato.²⁷

(3) È certo che, per tornare a noi, se non era la diligenza dell'eccellentissimo viceré e la pietà dell'eminentissimo arcivescovo, questo il pastore, quello il governatore, questo attendeva alle sue pecorelle, quello alli suoi sudditi, questo allo spirito, quello al corpo, questo all'orazioni, quello alle processioni, questo pregava, quello comandava, questo aiutava, quello sollecitava [...], questo dispensava, quello donava, questo beni celesti, quello beni terreni, questo grivada le sue pecorelle, quello li suoi vassalli, e l'un e l'altro insomma a gara governavano con straordinaria diligenza la lor gregge.²⁸

26. Giovanni Orlandi, *Dell'incendio del Monte di Somma. Compita relatione e di quanto è succeduto insino ad hoggi. Pubblicata per Giovanni Orlandi romano alla Pietà*, Naples, Lazzaro Scoriggio, 1631, p. 13.

27. Domenico Benigni, *La strage di Vesuvio. Lettera scritta all'illustrissimo signore abbate Perretti dal suo segretario*, Naples, Egidio Longo, 1632, f. [A5]v.

28. De Eugenii, *Il maraviglioso e tremendo incendio*, f. [B6]v.

As further illustrated in examples 4-7 below, the aspects emphasised most are the rapidity and determination with which the two figures took action to help the people, indicated by adverbs and adverbial phrases such as “subito” (“immediately”) (5, 6), “rattemente” (“rapidly”) (5), “con prestezza” (“promptly”) (4) and by the adjective “immediate” (“immediate”) (4). Also underscored is their concern and consideration for the physical and emotional welfare of the citizens: “temendo che in Napoli potesse seguire il medesimo spavento” (“fearing that the same terror could arrive in Naples”) (5); “non si deve tacere la clemenza e provvidenza” (“whose clemency and providence cannot be kept silent”) (7) and so on.

(4) Il cardinal Buoncompagno, che alla Torre del Greco stava godendo il beneficio di quell'aria propria alle sue indisposizioni, come meglio li fu concesso si ricondusse con prestezza in questa città. Ordinò immediate processioni et orationi per placare l'ira di Dio.²⁹

(5) [...] temendo [viz. l'arcivescovo] che in Napoli potesse seguire il medesimo spavento che colà in tutti si vedeva, per maggiore aiuto di questa città resolse di rattemente venirsene a questa volta, come fece al meglio che poté. E subito giunto diede ordine che in tutte le chiese si esponesse il Santissimo Sacramento [...].³⁰

(6) L'eccellentissimo signor viceré ancor haveva grandissima cura e usava grandissima diligenza di soccorre la gente che restava viva nelle terre distrutte dal foco. Subito mandò due galee all[a] volta della Torre del Greco per pigliare la gente che in essa si ritrovava viva [...].³¹

(7) Di questo modo si continuò gli altri giorni in continue processioni [...] con molta frequenza di popolo e signori con S.E., del quale non si deve tacere la clemenza e provvidenza poiché, inteso essere chiusi li passi dall'incendio e dall'acqua allo scampo di quelli infelici, mandò alla Torre detta Nuntiata e del Greco tre galere per ricuperare chi avesse potuto scappare dall'ira del fuoco [...].³²

29. [Marcantonio Padavino], *Relatione dell'incendio successo nel monte Vesuvio detto di Somma l'anno 1631 il mese di dicembre*, Venice, Giovan Pietro Pinelli, 1631, f. [A3]v.

30. Giulio Cesare Braccini, *Relazione dell'incendio fattosi nel Vesuvio alli 16 di dicembre 1631. Scritta dal signor abbate Giulio Cesare Braccini da Gioviano di Lucca in una lettera diretta all'eminetissimo e reverendissimo signore il sig. card. Girolamo Colonna*, Naples, Secondino Roncagliolo, 1631, f. [A6]r.

31. Giacomo Milesio, *La seconda parte delli avisi. Del reverendo padre pontano hibernese, habitante nella Croce di Palazzo. Di tutto quello ch'è successo in tutta la seconda settimana, e così l'haverete d'ogni sette in sette giorni*, Naples, Ottavio Beltrano, 1632, f. [A3]r.

32. Oliva, *Lettera del signor*, f. [A3]ra.

In other cases, the emphasis is on the tireless tenacity displayed by the two officials in tackling the catastrophe alongside the people. For instance, in examples 8 and 9 we note the use of concessive clauses underscoring the efforts made by the archbishop and the viceroy in guiding and taking part in the processions, even in the face of bad weather or poor health.

(8) [...] continuandosi tuttavia le processioni con l'intervento dell'eminantissimo padrone [viz. l'arcivescovo], ancorché siano piogge e fanghi, con edificazione di tutti assistendo alli sermoni [...].³³

(9) [...] uscì la processione generale con maggior prontezza (siami lecito dir così) di quella che suole nel giorno festivo al Santissimo Sacramento, con tutti i confaloni e religiosi, popoli minuto e nobile, cavallieri e signori, e viceré eccellentissimo, benché indisposto, proponendo il servizio di Dio e del publico a qualunque commodità [...].³⁴

Although, in general, the actions of these two figures are presented and emphasised using tones of praise, some of these works contain narrative passages in which their behaviour does not appear firm and resolute. Instead, they are portrayed in flight like the rest of the inhabitants, attempting to take shelter from the violence of the natural phenomena. By way of example, it is interesting to compare the episode – present in various texts – in which the Neapolitans are forced to leave their homes and seek safety in the streets, the churches or the countryside to escape the collapse of buildings caused by the strong quakes (examples 10-13).

(10) La notte del martedì i terremoti si fecero sentire tanto gagliardi e con tanto spavento che pochi furono quelli che si tenessero sicuri nelle proprie case, ma chi per le strade in carrozza e chi con sensi più devoti nelle chiese si tratenne.³⁵

(11) [...] né mai cessando li terremoti, molti per paura uscivano alla campagna, chi sotto tavole coperto, chi dentro la carrozza per le piazze, chi fuggire in lontani paesi, la maggior parte per le chiese.³⁶

(12) Quest'apportò [viz. il terremoto] sì gran terrore a tutti l'habitanti della città che non solamente non poteano riposare nelle proprie case e letti, ma ch' in chiesa, ch' in giardini e chi nelle strade publiche distante dall'edifici dimmorava.³⁷

33. *Ibid.*, p. 7b.

34. Orlandi, *Dell'incendio del Monte di Somma*, p. 8.

35. Benigni, *La strage di Vesuvio*, ff. A2v-A3r.

36. Oliva, *Lettera del signor*, f. [A3]ra.

37. Milano, *Vera relatione*, f. a2v.

(13) E fu tanto il timore di tal accidente che così il viceré come altri cavalieri la notte riposorno fuori di casa nelle piazze, chi sotto barracche e chi dentro carozze, per scampare dall'evidente pericolo che soprastava.³⁸

In examples 10-12, the effect of confusion and fear generated by the eruption is conveyed and emphasised by the repetition of the indefinite pronoun “chi” (“who”) that accompanies the confused stampede of the citizens, and through lexemes belonging to the dimension of fear: “spavento”, “terrore”, “timore” (“fright”, “terror”, “dread”). Instead, in example 13, it is the viceroy himself and other noblemen who are seeking shelter to save their lives. The construction of this passage can be read as a manifestation of the chronicler’s veiled critical attitude towards the viceroy. This is not expressed directly but emerges from the decision to portray Monterrey in the same way that the populace is generally represented: namely, overcome with fear.³⁹

A similar comment can be made on example 14, centred on the figure of the archbishop. Unlike examples 4-5 commented upon above, the haste with which Boncompagni rushes towards Naples does not appear to be connected with concern for his flock but motivated rather by the terror triggered by the onset of the eruption. We can note in particular the specification the chronicler made parenthetically, placing emphasis on a detail that was scarcely decorous for an archbishop, albeit tempered by what is stated in the following sentence regarding the arrangements made by Boncompagni:

(14) Ma l'eminentissimo signor cardinale Buoncompagno, arcivescovo di questa città, che in quel tempo habitava alla Torre del Greco, essendo quell'aria propitia alla sua indispositione [...], havendo sentito il primo principio, dubitando non esser sicuro per terra, se ne venne (non finito di vestire) subito a Napoli per mare sopra una picciola barchetta, che ivi vicino trovò a caso, et facendo ricorso al glorioso martire san Gennaro, protettor particolare di questa città. E giunto alla sua Chiesa Cathedrale fece esporre il Santissimo Sacramento, facendo quivi caldissime orationi.⁴⁰

38. Cardassi, *Relatione dell'irato Vesuvio*, p. 20.

39. Here I draw on the reflections made by De Caprio apropos the link between narrative construction and the ideological stance of the narrators in the chronicles. See Chiara De Caprio, “Architettura spaziale, organizzazione narrativa e postura ideologica nella Cronaca di Napoli di Notar Iacobo”, in *Linguaggi e ideologie del Rinascimento monarchico aragonese (1442-1503). Forme della legittimazione e sistemi di governo*, ed. by Fulvio Delle Donne and Antonietta Iacono, Naples, FedOA, 2018, pp. 83-100.

40. De Eugenii, *Il maraviglioso e tremendo incendio*, f. [A3]v.

4. *The role of the saints*

Among the numerous processions recorded in the *relazioni*, particular importance is given to those organised in honour of St Gennaro, in the course of which the “infinito” cortege of citizens accompanied the relics of the blood and head of the patron saint.⁴¹ The chroniclers record that some of these processions culminated in the salvific response of the saint, expressed through the sudden improvement in the weather and the alleviation of the natural phenomena caused by the volcanic activity, such as quakes, ashes and clouds of smoke. In the various accounts, these passages are constructed using conventional narrative schema that employ syntactical and textual devices to underscore the prodigious intervention of the saint, as seen in the following examples.

(1) Mercordi non si vedeva il monte per la grande nebbia che v’havea causato il fumo. A 21 hora si tornò a far la processione generale con le reliquie di sopra. Cosa degna di grande meraviglia! In apparire quelle santissime reliquie alla porta dell’Arcivescovato s’aprirno li nubbi oscuri, comparendo il sole in forma allegra di tal modo che consolò gli habitanti di Napoli, e il popolo con gran giubilo cominciaro ad esclamare e raccomandarsi al santo glorificandosi nel santo suo.⁴²

(2) Giunta che fu la processione fuora della città in faccia del monte Vesuvio, l’eminentissimo arcivescovo dopo alcune orationi fece molti segni di croce col sangue del glorioso santo a quel oscuro fumo verso il monte. Mirabil cosa! Si partì quell’horrore che copriva il monte e durò il tempo chiaro fino a notte.⁴³

(3) Usciti fuora di detta Porta [viz. Porta Capuana], l’eminentissimo padrone, pigliato nelle mani il sangue pretioso di quel santo, con sparger molte lacrime benedisse quel monte, e fù mirabil cosa: parve in tutto quel tempo della beneditione fermarsi le nuvole, poi confuse tra di loro intrigarsi, quasi spaventate, non sapendo che fare, sottosopra rivolgersi, accompagnando tutti

41. As noted by Gugg, “The Missing Ex-Voto”, p. 226, following the so-called Pollena eruption of Vesuvius in 472 CE, the figure of St Gennaro was invoked on numerous occasions to defend the city during the catastrophes that struck the area. However, it was largely after the 1631 eruption that the importance of the saint’s cult and the echo of the miraculous liquefaction of his blood assumed the proportions and significance that they still have today.

42. Milesio, *Vera relatione*, f. π2r.

43. De Eugenii, *Il maraviglioso e tremendo incendio*, f. B1r.

con alte voci e con pietosi affetti gridavano: “Pace Signore! Misericordia Signore!”⁴⁴

In these passages, the chroniclers prefigure the consequences caused by the action of the relics by employing cataphoric encapsulation, even within exclamatory formulas.⁴⁵ This textual device functions like an authentic narrative turning point. The account of the miraculous effects due to the intercession of the saint is condensed in words that anticipate the following content of the text without revealing it, generating an effect of suspense.⁴⁶ In all three cases, the encapsulation consists of the generic noun “cosa” (“thing”) accompanied by the adjective “mirabile” (“wondrous”) (2 and 3) or the adjectival phrase “degnà di grande meraviglia” (“worthy of great marvel”) (1), helping to characterise the event as extraordinary. We can also note the strategies adopted to recount the effects of the miracle on the natural elements and on the population in the third passage. The saint’s action is underscored by the anthropomorphic description of the clouds of smoke looming over Naples, which appear bewildered and “quasi spaventate” (“almost frightened”). The people, on the contrary, explode in exclamations of jubilation and thanks to St Gennaro: “Pace Signore! Misericordia Signore!” (“Lord give us peace! Lord have mercy!”). At a lexical level, the words proffered by the people are introduced by solutions of particular expressive potency, such as the verb “gridare” (“cry”) accompanied by the phrase “con alte voci e con pietosi affetti” (“in loud voices with piteous sentiment”).

The *relazioni* also include the report of the alleged apparition of St Gennaro above the cathedral in the act of blessing the people to guarantee his protection of the city. Unlike the previous examples, the vision of the patron saint is entrusted to reported speech. Here, it is interesting to note how the framework of the quote indicates the attitude adopted to the same news by the various chroniclers. In examples 4 and 5, the expressions “È voce di molti” (“It was said by many”) and “Dicesi pubblicamente” (“It was publicly declared”) indicate news that circulated broadly but about which there is no certainty, as suggested by the comment of the narrator,

44. Oliva, *Lettera del signor*, f. A2vb.

45. I refer to Ferrari, *Linguistica del testo*, p. 205, who defines cataphoric encapsulation as a textual device that refers to, and anticipates, the contents of an entire sentence or series of sentences.

46. Sergio Bozzola, *Retorica e narrazione del viaggio. Diari, relazioni, itinerari fra Quattro e Cinquecento*, Rome, Salerno, 2020, p. 132.

“il che in brieve con esattissima diligenza si acclarerà” (“which shall shortly, with precise diligence, be clarified”) (5).

(4) È voce di molti che uscendo le pie reliquie dalla porta maggiore del Duomo, all'improvviso lampeggiar del sole apparisse il glorioso s. Gennaro sopra la chiesa in habito pontificale benedicendo le genti.⁴⁷

(5) Dicesi pubblicamente che dalla parte di dentro del tempio dell'Arcivescovato sopra la porta maggiore in una finestra s. Gennaro in habito pontificio, come vero patritio e pastore, havesse fatto la beneditione al popolo in tempo usciva in processione, il che in brieve con esattissima diligenza si acclarerà.⁴⁸

However, the examples in which the story of the miracle of St Gennaro is attributed a high degree of reliability are decidedly more frequent (see 6-9). An event as extraordinary as the apparition of the saint is presented as a credible and real event since it is reported by numerous – “molte” (“many”) (6), “più di 50” (“more than 50”) (7) – “persone degne di fede” (“trustworthy people”) or “religiosi” (“religious”) whose knowledge is based on direct experience. The presentation of reliable witnesses is also accompanied by introductory phrases that stress the truthfulness of the evidence: “con giuramento affermano” (“declare under oath”) (6), “si offeriscono deporlo con giuramento” (“offering to testify it under oath”) (8), and so on. Furthermore, several proofs are offered to support the credibility of the story: in example 8, referring to what has just been said, the chronicler argues “si deve credere” (“it must be believed”) since the redemptive effects of the apparition of the saint could be perceived in the improvement of the weather. Instead, in example 9, the narrator maintains that the story of the miracle is strongly supported by the fact that “tutti convengono del tempo, del modo e del luogo” (“all are in agreement about the time, the manner and the place”) in which they saw St Gennaro.

(6) Ad hore 20 si fe' un'altra general provisione portando detto eminentissimo sig. le sudette reliquie. Et avanti che il sangue di s. Gennaro uscisse dalla maggiore chiesa, l'aria, ch'era offuscata e nuvolosa, si rischiarò subito, cossi molte persone degne di fede dicono e con giuramento affermano haver visto risplendentissimo il glorioso santo vestito pontificamente benedicendo il populo.⁴⁹

47. Capradosso, *Il lagrimevole avvenimento*, f. [A3]r.

48. Orlandi, *Dell'incendio del Monte di Somma*, p. 10.

49. Milano, *Vera relatione*, f. [a3]r.

(7) Vi sono più di 50 persone religiose e secolari degne di fede quali si esibiscono con giuramento deponere qualmente nel medesimo tempo che si aprì la nube e si mostrò il sole videro in habito pontificale sopra detta porta dell'Arcivescovato uno che benediceva il popolo, tenendo per fermo quello fosse s. Gennaro, sollecito protettore di questa città.⁵⁰

(8) [...] affermano alcuni devoti e si offeriscono deporlo con giuramento che veddeno oculatamente apparir il santo in habito pontificale benedicendo il populo sopra la porta principale della chiesa. Il che si deve credere perché se vedde chiaro che subito il giorno si rasserenò et apparve il sole, che apportò gran consolatione a tutto il populo.⁵¹

(9) Vi sono persone che per nascita e proprie qualità sono degne di fede, le quali depongono in quel tempo haver veduto il santo protettore in habito pontificale sopra la porta della chiesa che benediceva il popolo. Alla testimonianza de chi riferisce il miracolo aggiunge gran forza che tutti convengono del tempo, del modo e del luogo in che l'hanno veduto.⁵²

The primacy of the *adtestatio rei visae* as a cognitive paradigm is also underlined by the attitude displayed in his *relazione* by Marcantonio Padavino, Venetian ambassador in Naples. He confirms that he was not present at any of the miracles that are being spoken of in the city and that all the people he found related the episodes based on what they had “intesi” (“gathered”) from someone else. For this reason, Padavino explains that he cannot give credence to the rumours circulating about the apparition of the patron saint and the other miraculous episodes, despite being considered plausible effects of the hand of God.

(10) A questo proposito non stimo fuori del caso dire che si sono divulgati molti miracoli: altri hanno detto che s. Gennaro sia stato veduto in habito di vescovo sopra il Duomo a benedire il popolo; altri che un'immagine della beatissima Vergine habbia pianto con lagrime di sangue [...]. Io ho fatta diligenza per ritrovar persona che mi affermi haver veduto alcuni delli predetti miracoli, ma tutti mi dicono d'haverli intesi, costantemente li predicano per veri. Credo come buon christiano che Dio nell'immagini de' santi e sue medesime possi far vedere tutte le cose narrate, ma non posso dire che al presente ciò sia successo perché non sono stato degno di vederlo, né ho trovato altri che parli di vista.⁵³

50. Oliva, *Lettera del signor*, f. A2vb.

51. De Eugenii, *Il maraviglioso e tremendo incendio*, f. B1r.

52. Benigni, *La strage di Vesuvio*, ff. A3v-[A4]r.

53. [Padavino], *Relatione dell'incendio*, f. B3r.

In the *relazioni* analysed here, the redeeming actions of the saints are also often recounted in the form of anecdotes. These represent micro-narrations for illustrative purposes centred on individual protagonists⁵⁴ and can be recognised at a structural level, as pointed out by Karine Abinev, by an economy of action and a clearly marked beginning and end.⁵⁵ Reading the works in question, we can note the presence of the same micro-narrations in different reports and also observe the various functions that the same anecdote can have within the narrative structure. For example, here we compare the same story that appeared in the reports of the abbot from Lucca, Giulio Cesare Braccini, and of Scipione Cardassi, member of the Accademia degli Incogniti.⁵⁶

A Portici racconta il sig. Antonio Mascambruno che essendosi posto in fuga con la moglie e figliuoli, senza poter salvar nulla delle cose che in un suo palazzo aveva, prese una immagine di Nostra Donna, tenuta da esso in gran venerazione, e la appese alla porta a lei raccomandando il tutto. Ritornandovi poi ha trovato ogni cosa abbruciato eccetto il detto palazzo.⁵⁷

Né minore fu la fede d'un patrioto della terra di Portici che havea in una devota immagine della Santissima Vergine Madre di Dio che tenea in casa, che, vedendo distrutto e atterrato tutto il rimanente de' palaggi e case di detta terra, e che già stava anco in procinto di pericolare la sua, e dubitando che non fusse in quella soggiaciuto e oppresso con la sua fameglia, se ne fuggì dalla casa con tutti li suoi, lassandola in abbandono con la robba, e nell'uscire pigliò la detta immagine della Vergine Santissima e l'affisse nella porta della casa dicendo nel partire: "Tu, Vergine Santissima, mi guardi la mia casa e la robba. Oh Dio! Oh divina providenza! Oh fede santa!" Restò sotterrato tutto l'habitato contorno e sola fu libera, intatta e illesa la casa e robba di quel devoto cittadino, come guardata dalla sua protettrice e avvocata.⁵⁸

As we can see, the narrative core of the two passages is the same: a citizen of Portici, forced to abandon his home that was threatened by

54. Lavocat, "Narratives of Catastrophe", p. 263.

55. Karine Abinev, "Un genre de discours miniature: pour un modèle de l'anecdote", *Pratiques*, 157-158 (2013), pp. 119-132: 123.

56. Braccini, *Relazione dell'incendio*; Cardassi, *Relatione dell'irato Vesuvio*.

57. Braccini, *Relazione dell'incendio*, f. E1r.

58. Cardassi, *Relatione dell'irato Vesuvio*, p. 28.

the earthquake, affixed an image of the Blessed Virgin, to whom he was particularly devoted, to the door before leaving. Upon his return, the man found his home still intact through the intercession of the Virgin. In both cases, the story relates the miraculous experience of an individual who receives grace by virtue of his faith. In Braccini's *relazione*, however, the inclusion of the anecdote is primarily functional, to enhance the testimonial value of the account. It is inserted in the text in the form of reported speech referred to an identified individual – Messer Antonio Mascambruno – who recounted his experience. The episode is presented in minimal form and in a spare and referential tone. Cardassi, on the other hand, builds up the story of the event in a more dramatic manner. Firstly, by inserting a series of gerunds that delays the start of the action – “vedendo distrutto e atterrato tutto il rimanente [...] dubitando che non fusse in quella soggiaciuto” (“seeing destroyed and demolished all the rest [...] fearing that he would be overwhelmed in it”) – and secondly by the heartfelt appeal for help made to the Virgin recorded in direct speech, “Tu, Vergine Santissima, mi guardi la mia casa” (“You, Most Holy Virgin, look after my house”). In conclusion, he also explains the possible cause-effect relation between the man's devotion and the protective action of the Virgin – “come guardata dalla sua protettrice e avvocata” (“as if guarded by his protectress and advocate”).⁵⁹ The purpose of the anecdote presented in this way is above all to emphasise the wonderment and the exemplary value of the profound faith displayed by an individual identified only as “patrioto della terra di Portici” (“an inhabitant of the area of Portici”).

5. Conclusion

This discussion has demonstrated, in the genre of *relazioni* on natural disasters, the widespread use by different chroniclers of similar stylistic solutions and narrative choices to relate the reactions of the communities affected by the catastrophe. The case study selected was the eruption of Vesuvius in 1631, which, in terms of its political and socio-cultural significance, is one of the disasters that left the greatest mark on the history of the Kingdom of Naples and of Europe in the early modern period.

59. Here, the conjunction “come” clearly has the hypothetical sense of “as if it had been”.

We have seen how, in relating the impact of the Vesuvian catastrophe, the chroniclers employed strategies conceived to convey the shock and fear it generated among the people. The selected works offer the image of a terror-stricken mob of people “quasi fuori di sé stessi” (“almost beside themselves”), rushing to seek shelter and forgiveness for their deeds.⁶⁰ The decision to represent the mob as prey to irrational feelings is strictly functional to the exaltation of the actions of the institutions and saints.

As regards the institutions, the narrators underline the promptness and efficacy of the provisions adopted by their representatives to assist the population materially and spiritually. The archbishop and viceroy play leading roles and are presented as true guides for the community in addressing the calamity. Nevertheless, although their action is generally praised, there are also some elements of criticism – albeit veiled and indirect – when these figures are portrayed in moments of weakness.

Apropos the saints, the writers emphasise the faith demonstrated by the people of Naples, both collectively in scenes involving the entire city, and individually in anecdotes dealing with a particular person. In both cases, the miraculous action is presented using two strategies: one aimed at conveying the wonder aroused by the prodigy, and the other at persuading the reader of the reliability of the account of the supernatural event.

In conclusion, from the perspective of a historic-linguistic analysis, we have seen how the *relazioni* on natural disasters aim to inform, amaze and convince the readers, transmitting an image of the event and the people involved that reflects the communicative ends of the individual writers and their commissioners.

60. De Eugenii, *Il maraviglioso e tremendo incendio*, f. [A4]v.

MAITE IRACEBURU JIMÉNEZ

“The Hand of God” in News Pamphlets on Disasters of Natural Origin: Lexical and Discursive Strategies

1. *Introduction*

The discussion in this chapter analyses the presence of God in Spanish news pamphlets on disasters of natural origin through the different lexico-discursive strategies used by the authors of these documents, who are often unknown.¹ Through the selection of an *ad hoc* corpus, I will show how divine intervention gave a reason for existence and protection (in the form of a hero) to the faithful in the face of serious disasters of natural origin, such as earthquakes, floods and fires. News of these fateful events spread throughout Europe via the forerunners of the press, news pamphlets, not only in order to publicise such misfortunes, but also to explain their ultimate cause (the sins of humankind) to the most avid readers and listeners.

An analysis of the lexico-discursive strategies used in the texts that comprise the selected corpus will make clear how the authors of these documents seemed to follow their own form of discourse – the news pamphlet discursive tradition² – which undoubtedly streamlined the writing of these texts. They are clearly marked strongly by the Church, given the need to recount and publicise the disasters of the time from a strictly religious point of view.

The use of different comparisons and appeals to God, as well as the reiteration of certain fixed expressions identifying a specific type of

1. Nieves Pena Sueiro, “Estado de la cuestión sobre el estudio de las Relaciones de sucesos”, *Pliegos de Bibliofilia*, 1 (2001), pp. 43-57.

2. Maite Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo de las relaciones de sucesos (siglo XVII)*, JANUS. Estudios sobre el Siglo de Oro, SIELAE, A Coruña, Universidade da Coruña, 2018.

discourse (in this case, that of natural catastrophes) will highlight the strong social and cultural connotations of disasters of natural origin, as the *DisComPoSE* group has shown over the last few years.³

On the other hand, the lexico-discursive analysis of the selected pamphlets only underlines the importance of the sometimes-unnoticed translation work carried out by the discreet translators of the period. Thanks to their work, the news pamphlet accounts were widely distributed throughout Europe.

So, using linguistic strategies that introduced “the hand of God” into the news pamphlets, it was possible to convince ordinary listeners of the accounts that their sins were responsible for the misfortunes sent from heaven.

2. “The hand of God” through lexico-discursive strategies in news pamphlets on disasters of natural origin

This section analyses the portrait of God through the lexico-discursive strategies in the selected texts. These linguistic resources make it possible to identify the discursive tradition of news pamphlets on disasters of natural origin.⁴

2.1. Lexical resources: nominalisation

In order to study the presence of “the hand of God” in news pamphlets on disasters of natural origin, it is first worth highlighting the different allusions to God in the selected corpus. So, throughout the ten news pamphlets studied here, the various correspondents refer to Him as “Dios”

3. *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture*, ed. by Domenico Cecere, Chiara De Caprio, Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Pasquale Palmieri, Rome, Viella, 2018; Domenico Cecere, “*Subterranea conspiración*. Terremoti, informazione e politica nella monarchia di Carlo II”, *Studi storici*, 60/4 (2019), pp. 811-843; Gennaro Schiano, “Las relaciones de desastres naturales entre género y texto. El caso de la riada de San Policarpo (Salamanca, 1626)”, *Cuadernos AISPI*, 15 (2020), pp. 209-226.

4. The corpus analysed can be found in the bibliography section. To transcribe the texts, I have followed the editing criteria of the Red CHARTA, available at <https://www.redcharta.es/criterios-de-edicion/>. Because of the length of the titles of the pamphlets, and in order to make it easier to read this study, each document has been named *Relación* with a number from 1 to 10, as well as with the printing date of the sheet [e.g., *Relación 1* (1627)]. This will be the way of referring to the different news pamphlets mentioned throughout this study.

(“God”, with a frequency standardised by a million of 0.15% of cases),⁵ “nuestro Señor/Nuestro señor” (“Our Lord”, with a frequency of 0.05%), “el Señor” (“the Lord”, with a frequency of 0.03%), “Dios nuestro Señor” (“God, Our Lord”, with a frequency of 0.01%), and “su magestad divina, su divina Magestad” (“His Divine Majesty”), “Divina magestad” (“Divine Majesty”), “nuestro Señor Iesu Christo” (“Our Lord Jesus Christ”), “el gra<n> señor n<uest>ro” (“Our Great Lord) and “Christo Señor Nuestro” (“Christ Our Lord”), each with a frequency of 0.004%. These different names of the Christian deity in the news pamphlets allowed the text to be given a degree of stylistic variety in order to avoid the constant repetition of one name for the Supreme Being. However, the mentions of God do not end here, as the same documents also contain nouns that refer to the ultimate subject in relation to the disasters of natural origins reported. In this way, the nouns associated with God allude, on the one hand, to his wrath (which materialises in the form of punishment), while, on the other, they appeal to his mercy and pity. Thus, despite what might be expected, the noun “ira” (“anger”) appears in the corpus with a frequency of only 0.012%, compared to 0.02% for “piedad” (“pity”) and 0.036% for “misericordia” (“mercy”). Thus, it seems that the authors of the pamphlets would prefer not to emphasise the portrait of a vengeful God, but would rather portray the figure of a pitiful and merciful God in whom the listeners and readers of these texts could trust in such dramatic situations.

Examples of the noun “ira” (“anger”):

(1) [i]ndicios mas que ciertos de nuestras graves culpas, cuya retinencia en ellas ha ocasionado la **ira**⁶ del Omnipotente braço de Dios, aunque se ha dexao ver con vn breve rasgo de su Divina Justicia: [...].⁷

5. Note here how the percentages of standardised frequencies per million are very low, as the corpus consists of a total of 16,834 words. I used Sketch Engine, the corpus manager and text analysis software developed by Lexical Computing Limited (2003), to obtain the data. However, for this diachronic study of the language, qualitative rather than quantitative analysis of the data is more relevant, as will be seen in the following pages.

6. To make it easier to read the different examples, I have decided to under underline the terms analysed.

7. *Relación 3* (1680), “RELACION GENERAL, EN QVE SE DA NOTICIA DE todo lo sucedido en el memorable, y lastimoso mes de Setiembre deste pre-sente año de 1680. Referense las gran-des, y repetidas tempestades, avenidas, y ruinas de puentes, y edificios, que hubo en Castilla, y otras partes que verá el curioso Lector”, Sevilla, Juan Cabeças [EXPOBUS], f. 1r.

(2) En la muy nombrada Villa de Zafra fueron tantas las aguas que sobrevinieron, que obligaron à algunos de sus moradores à que buscasen prestamente donde salvar sus vidas, como lo hizieron, acogindose à lo mas alto de las casas, desde donde miravan **la ira de Dios**, y con solloços, y afectos le pedian misericordia.⁸

(3) Toda la gente à huydo **la ira de Dios** temiendo, solo yó (sic) en medio de Troya estas tragedias contemplo.⁹

Examples of the noun “piedad” (“pity”):

(1) [p]ara suplicar a Dios vse de **piedad** con ellos y no quiera castigarlos, compañía sus merecimientos. Y assi roguemos a Dios vse de **piedad** con ellos, que cierto el mu<n>do se acaba compañía las señales vemos.¹⁰

Examples of the noun “misericordia” (“mercy”):

(1) El Señor por su **misericordia** nos tenga a todos de su mano, y nos de muerte prevenida. LAVS DEO.¹¹

(2) Acudian todos a los Templos, para alivio de su pena, y alcançar de las pidosissimas entrañas de Dios **misericordia**, mas aun esta puerta puerta hallavan cerrada, viendo las fuertes murallas, y edificios arruynados, y assolados crecia el dolor, y postrados en tierra se abraçavan con ella, y de rodillas pedian al cielo **misericordia**.¹²

8. *Relación 3* (1680), f. 2r.

9. *Relación 9* (1614), “RELACION VERDA-dera, de vn Caso terrible y espantoso, digno de ser memorado, el qual compañía en la Isla de la Tercera, Sabado en veinte y quatro dias del mes de Mayo, deste presente año de 1614. En la qual se declara de vn terremoto, y temblor de la tierra que huuo, adonde se destruye-ron nueue villas, y aldeas, hundiendo en ellas los Templos, Monasterios, Caserías, dende el techo, hasta los suelos, que fue vn castigo grande, que Dios N<uestro> S<eñor> nos quiso embiar por nuestros pecados, como por la obra lo verán”, Barcelona, Gabriel Graells, Esteuan Liberòs [CBDRS], f. 2v.

10. *Relación 9* (1614), f. 4r.

11. *Relación 1* (1627), “RELACION VERDADERA DE LOS espantosos y notables daños que hizo un grande terremoto en la Pulla parte del Reyno de Napoles, a 30.de Julio 1627. Traduzido de Toscano en Castellano de un memorial imbia-do de Italia a un Religioso grave de la Orden de san Francisco desta Ciudad de Barcelona”, Barcelona, layme Matevad [CBDRS], f. 3r.

12. *Relación 10* (1648), “RELACION DEL GRAN TERREMOTO, O temblor de tierra que assolò toda la Ciudad de Chile en el nuevo mundo, sin dexar Templos, casas fuertes, ni edificios, que en menos de un quarto de hora no derribasse por el suelo. Escrita por el P<adre> Iuan Gonçalez Chaparro de la Compañía de Iesus”, Sevilla, Francisco de Lyra [CBDRS], ff. 1r-1v.

The *Aviso tercero*, dealing with the earthquakes in Naples [*Aviso 6* (1632)] therefore mentions God’s mercy in order to exonerate him from responsibility for the punishment people believed they had received from him. Note here also, as in *Relación 7* (1624) and *Relación 8* (1618), the repetition of the expression “fue nuestro Señor servido de”, followed by the infinitive, then the conjunction “que” to serve the past imperfect subjunctive, typical of the historical period under study:¹³

(1) Pero no **ha sido nuestro Señor seruido de castigar** aquella Ciudad, en essa manera pues por intercession de su santissima Madre Maria, primera, y antigua Abogada, y Patrona, y de n<ues>tros Santos, tutelares, ha vsado con nosotros de **misericordia**, fuera de nuestro merecer, entreteniendo por tantos ruegos la deuida, y merecida justicia.¹⁴

(2) Y **fue seruido Dios N<uestro> S<eñor> que** con la grande tempestad de ayres Cierços, y con la corriente del mar Oceano, y nieues que caian gran cantidad cada dia, yelos que se yuan amontonando, de manera que los dichos yelos y nieues rompieron los diques y fortalezas se a negaron tantos pueblos y lugares que agora no puede entrar que comer ni vestir, q<ue> es gran lastima auer muerto tanta gente de hambre y de frio [...].¹⁵

(3) Y al cabo de tantos trabajos **fue nuestro Señor seruido de embiar** vna tempestad por la mar con vna contrauanda de vientos, que parecia acabarse el mundo, dandose los baxeles vnos co<n> otros [...].¹⁶

13. In the online databank CORDE (*Corpus diacrónico del español*, Real Academia Española, available at <http://corpus.rae.es/cordenet.html>), there are 185 cases of this construction in 84 documents between c. 1430 and 1698.

14. *Aviso 6* (1632), “AVISO TERCERO, EN EL QVAL SE DA CVENTA de todos los sucessos, assi de fuegos como de es-pantosos terremotos, y estragos que ha hecho la montaña que està cerca de Napoles, tres millas, llamada Soma, y en otro tiempo Vesuuio, desde los años de 5179. De la creación del mundo, à cinco dias del mes de Febrero, cien años antes del nacimiento de Christo, que fue el primer in-cendio, hasta el año de 1631. À 16. De Deziembre, dando razon por los años lo que ha sucedido. Va añadido a la fin vn deuoto remedio contra los terremotos”, Barcelona, Esteuan Liberòs [CBDRS], ff. 1v-2r.

15. *Relación 7* (1624), “RELACION VERDADERA, EMBIADA DE LOS ESTADOS DE FLANDES POR personas fidedignas, de la ruyna qüe (sic) ha causado el mucho yelo y nieue en la Isla de Olanda, y como el rio LeecK ha anegado mas de quarenta ciudades y villas, donde murieron muchas personas, y se perdió gran cantidad de hazienda, y ganados mayores y menores, como mas largamente se refiere en esta relación”, Madrid, Iuan Gonçalez [EXPOBUS], f. 1v.

16. *Relación 8* (1618), “RELACION VERDADERA, QVE truxo Miguel de Valdeosero Correo de a cauallo de su Magestad, del lastimoso di-luuio, que vuo el mes

(4) [m]ucho animo se arrojó en el agua, y **fue Dios seruido** saliesse della saluo y sano, que fue mucho vn muchacho que nunca lo auian visto nadar, [...].¹⁷

Thus, although the noun “ira” (“anger”) appears in only 0.01% of the cases in the selected documents, the noun “castigo” (“punishment”) appears with a frequency of 0.03% of cases throughout the corpus. In this way, the news pamphlet correspondent is less interested in stressing the supposed origin or cause of the disaster of natural origin (such as divine wrath) and prefers to emphasise the interpretation of the misfortune, which would be nothing other than a punishment sent from heaven, as can be seen in the following accounts. In this way, these punishments would be “para nuestra enmienda” (“to correct us”; *Relación 3* (1680)), and would come “del cielo” (“from heaven”; *Aviso 6* (1632)), and would appear to be “castigo de Dios Nuestro Señor” (“punishment from God Our Lord”, *Relación 7* (1624)) and “un castigo grande, que Dios Nuestro Señor nos quiso embiar por nuestros pecados” (“a great punishment which God Our Lord wanted to send us for our sins”, *Relación 9* (1614)):

(1) Temerosos los vezinos con tal golpe, y que parar resistirle no avia fuerças humanas, acudiero<n> conrritos à las Divinas, aclamando misericordia al Summo Criador; que aunque oyò sus clamores, quiso pasar adelante con su **castigo**, para nuestra enmienda, [...].¹⁸

(2) Y para que esto mejor se entienda quiero referir las miserias que de semejantes incendios en otro tiempo han sucedido para que aprendan los que no lo saben, como viuiamos sujetos cada dia à semejantes y mayores **castigos** del cielo.¹⁹

(3) Dize el Licenciado Pedro de la Huerta Consejero en el Consejo de Flandes, q<ue> en Ola<n>da se han anegado mas de quarenta villas y lugares grandes y pequeños, que es grande lastima verlo, otros erdó, son mas de sesenta: y **parece castigo de Dios N<uestro> S<eñor>** [...].²⁰

de Nouiembre deste año de 1617. En la ciudad de Barcelona, y en otros lugares, y de la perdida de Mones-terios, (sic) y muertes de muchas gentes, y otras que milagrosamente es-caparon, como por la relacio<n> se declara”, Sevilla, Alonso Rodriguez Gamarra [CBDRS], f. 1r.

17. *Relación 8* (1618), f. 2r.

18. *Relación 3* (1680), f. 2v.

19. *Aviso 6* (1632), f. 2r.

20. *Relación 7* (1624), f. 2v.

(4) RELACION VERDA-dera, de vn Caso terrible y espantoso, digno de ser memorado, el qual compañía en la Isla de la Tercera, Sabado en veinte y quatro dias del mes de Mayo, deste presente año de 1614. En la qual se declara de vn terreno-to, y temblor de la tierra que huuo, adonde se destruyeron nueue villas, y aldeas, hundiendo en ellas los Templos, Monasterios, Caserías, dende el techo, hasta los suelos, **que fue vn castigo grande, que Dios N<uestro> S<eñor> nos quiso embiar por nuestros pecados, como por la obra lo erdó.**²¹

Meanwhile, the punishment God inflicts on Isla Tercera is compared to other historical punishments, such as the destruction of Rome, Numantia, Carthage, Troy and Constantinople. Note, then, the epic nature²² of misfortune, which is also echoed in the news pamphlets. This fragment also includes an appeal to the Virgin, *advocate* and *procurator*, as well as to the saints, whose intercession is requested in order to obtain God’s forgiveness:²³

No se ha visto tal estrago, desde aquel castigo horre<n>do de las infames ciudades, ni hecho ta<n> breue tie<m>po. Ni la erdónión de Roma hecha con el gra<n>de exercito por el barbaro Totila godo mas de baxo suelo. Ni el de Numa<n>cia, y Cartago ni el de troya (sic) por los griegos ni patras por los cruzados, quando a Gerusalen fueron. Ni la gran Constantinopla destruida por Bayazaceto, Imperado Constantino el fin del Imperio Griego. El estrago fue terrible, y los llantos lastimeros de los tristes moradores pobres sin erdón remedio. [...] **Assi mesmo erdón llora<n> porque erdó que creyeron**

21. *Relación 9* (1614), f. 1r.

22. The epic overtones in the news pamphlets often go hand in hand with the form of expression chosen in the pamphlet, as is the case here, where verse has been chosen instead of prose. See Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

23. The noun “perdón” (forgiveness) appears only twice (with a frequency of 0.008% of cases) throughout the selected corpus: “Haziendo tambien soltar los pressos que avia en las Carce-les, avn que furan (sic) por grauissimos y grandes delitos, y adquiriendo, y alcansando **perdon** de las partes contrarias, [...]”: [*Relación 5* (1630), “RELACION BREVE DEL RARO, Y LASTIMOSO CASO que compañía en la Isla de San Miguel, en dos de Setiembre, lunes a medio dia despues de comer. Recopilado por el Padre Antonio Fernández Franco, natural de la misma Isla. En este Año de mil y seyscientos y treinta. Imprso (sic) con licencia, en Baeça por Pedro de la Cuesta Gimenes. Año de 1630”, Baeza, Pedro de la Cuesta Gimenes [EXPOBUS], f. 2r.]; “Y assi roguemos a Dios vse de piedad con ellos, que cierto el mu<n>do se acaba segun las señales vemos. Supliquemos á la Virgen sea nuestra abogada, y creo siendo ella procuradora el **perdon** tenemos cierto, y luego a los santos, y santas, de la Real Corte del cielo, roguémosles, que ante Dios sean procuradores nuestros” [*Relación 9* (1614), f. 4r].

embia embiarles Dios el castigo [***] pecados viejos. [...] siguiendo de palio el cielo, sufriendo los infortunios, que causan todos los tie<m>pos, desta Iglesia catedra, parroquias, y monasterios se hazen grandes rogatiuas, y [oraci]ones sin cuento, **para suplicar a Dios vse de piedad con ellos y no quiera castigarlos, compañía sus merecimientos. Y assi roguemos a Dios vse de piedad con ellos, que** cierto el mu<n>do se acaba compañía las señales vemos. **Supliquemos á la Virgen sea nuestra abogada, y creo siendo ella procuradora el erdón tenemos cierto, y luego a los santos, y santas, de la Real Corte del cielo, roguémosles, que ante Dios sean procuradores nuestros [...].**²⁴

Likewise, the concept of punishment is also expressed in its infinitive verb form, as can be seen in the two testimonies collected in the corpus for the verb “castigar” (“to punish”):

(1) Pero no ha sido nuestro Señor seruido de **castigar** aquella Ciudad, en essa manera [...].²⁵

(2) [s]iruiendo de palio el cielo, sufriendo los infortunios, que causan todos los tie<m>pos, desta Iglesia catedra, parroquias, y monasterios se hazen grandes rogatiuas, y [oraci]ones sin cuento, para suplicar a Dios vse de piedad con ellos y **no quiera castigarlos**, compañía sus merecimientos [...].²⁶

In the following extract, the importance of this discourse when it comes to guaranteeing the truth of the information reported using the ultimate “verbum dicendi, decir” (“to say”) is notable.²⁷ This could also reflect the fact that news pamphlets were often disseminated orally (“dize que [...], dezian que [...], dize, que [...]”):

El Licenciado Cleyson, Abogado del Consejo de Flandes, **dize que** ha visto vnas cartas que vinieron al dicho Consejo, **que dizen** ay anegadas mas de sesenta villas y lu-gares, y **dize, que los mismos dezian q<ue> es castigo de Dios nuestro S<eñor>** porque pensauan destruyr y anegar las tierras de Flandes y Brabante, y otras del Rey don Felipe nuestro señor, [...].²⁸

In addition, the veracity of the events narrated in this same report (which are “auténticos y verdaderos”) is supported by the fact that it is

24. *Relación 9* (1614), ff. 3v-4r.

25. *Aviso 6* (1632), f. 1v.

26. *Relación 9* (1614), f. 4r.

27. Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*, p. 633.

28. *Relación 7* (1624), f. 1v.

a translation²⁹ of the letters from the German Ambassador that had just arrived from Flanders:

Son estas nuevas autenticas y verdaderas, tralada-das de las cartas del señor Embaxador de Alemania, venidas de Flandes [...].³⁰

Thus, if the disaster of natural origins and misfortunes are motivated by God’s anger at the sins of humanity for which he inflicts his punishment, this divine retribution is but a reflection on Earth of the Last Judgement, as indicated by the different accounts, in which the syntagma “juyzio final” is recorded with a frequency of 0.012%:

(1) En Fogio en el punto que fue el terremoto se rebolvio un monte de tierra que saco el viento con su grande fuerça del cen-tro della, [...] **de suerte que parecia un juyzio final**, como lo fue, para aquellas pobres almas que saltaron, cuyo numero por agora no puede saberse.³¹

(2) **Y llegando el di-cho Correo a la ciudad de Lerida, le parecio auia llegado vn juyzio final**, porq<ue> hallò las casas del arrabal caydas, [...].³²

(3) Era lastimoso espectaculo oyr los gritos, y alaridos, de los que estaban en pie, los gemidos de los que oprimidos con la violencia de los edificios rendian la vida: [...] **con que todo era un horrible estra-go y representacion de el dia de juyzio.**³³

Similarly, *Relación 5* (1630) documents an ellipsis of the noun “juyzio” in the consecutive subordinate construction “que pensauan ser el dia (del juyzio) final” (“that they thought it was the last [Judgement] day”):

Eran tantos los rayos de fuego, y su horrendo rumor, que parecia que los Cielos se convertian en fuego, y causa tanto espan-to a la gente **que pensauan ser el dia final** [...].³⁴

29. On the translation of news pamphlets, see Sagrario López Poza, “Relaciones de sucesos traducidas al español”, in *Géneros editoriales y relaciones de sucesos en la Edad Moderna*, ed. by Pedro Manuel Cátedra and María Eugenia Díaz Tena, Salamanca, SIERS-SEMYR, 2013, pp. 249-273.

30. *Relación 7* (1624), f. 2v.

31. *Relación 1* (1627), f. 3r.

32. *Relación 8* (1618), f. 2v.

33. *Relación 10* (1648), f. 1r.

34. *Relación 5* (1630), f. 1v.

Meanwhile, as previously mentioned, divine punishment occurs, as it has to, as a consequence of the (great) faults of humanity, which anger God. This causal link is well reflected in *Relación 9* (1614), which includes in its title the idea of such divine punishment. This, in turn, would be explained by the original sin of Adam and Eve, which not even clergymen escape, as shown in the third account mentioned. Note also, in the first extract, the importance of the volitional verb “querer” (“to want”): God does not send disasters of natural origins by mistake; he does it for his own reasons. Thus, the noun “pecados” (“sins”) appears with a frequency of 0.016% of cases in the selected documents, although it is noteworthy that all the examples recorded are from *Relación 9* (1614), the one that refers to the earthquake on Isla Tercera. None of the other pamphlets analysed record any occurrence for this noun:

(1) RELACION VERDA-dera, de vn Caso terrible y espantoso, digno de ser memorado, el qual compañía en la Isla de la Tercera, Sabado en veinte y quattrodias del mes de Mayo, deste presente año de 1614. En la qual se declara de vn terreno-to, y temblor de la tierra que huuo, adonde se destruyeron nueue villas, y aldeas, hundiendo en ellas los Templos, Monasterios, Caserías, dende el techo, hasta los suelos, **que fue vn castigo grande, que Dios N<uestro> S<eñor> nos quiso embiar por nuestros pecados, como por la obra lo veràn.**³⁵

(2) Todos los hijos de Adan, es muy justo que lloremos **el castigo que Dios hizo, por gra<n>des pecados nuestros**, digo [...].³⁶

(3) [p]edian socorro de tierra todo cubiertos, Clerigos y Sacristanes, mas llamauan al desierto. [...] Y lloran amargamente (to[dos] por padres, y amigos muer[tos] porque debaxo las ruynas está ya hedi<n>do los cuerpos. Assi mesmo tambien llora<n> porque dizen que creyeron embiarles Dios el castigo [***] **pecados** viejos.³⁷

In *Relación 9* (1614), therefore, the correspondent’s interest in emphasising the sinful nature of humans stands out, as it indicates how even a priest recognises himself as a “sinner”:

El Cura desta Señora, viendo el riguroso estrue<n>do, el estrago de la villa, y la ruyna del Templo Acudío por remediar aquel relicario inmenso, que quedo

35. *Relación 9* (1614), f. 1r.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Relación 9* (1614), ff. 3r-3v-4r.

por darnos vida en diuino Sacramento. Tomô (sic) la santa Custodia, con diuinio acatamiento los ojos en el Señor, assi començo diziendo. Eterno Dios, que a las manos deste gusanillo vuestro, os quisisteis acoger en tan trabaxoso tiempo. Que es esto dulce Iesus, nueuos prodigios son estos, pues a vos no os perdonays, quando ay pecados agenos, Adonde os dare possada pues veys q<ue> vn arbo iniesto, no a quedado donde pueda cubriros con este velo. El remedio que ay Señor, porq<ue> no os maltrate el vie<n>to que toca en aquesta tierra tan lleno de lama y cieno. Sera en mi alma encerraros que es el remedio postrero. y el que **aqueste pecador** puede dar en este tiempo. Dixo, y consumio al Señor y despues de estar suspenso contemplando en la tragedia tan memorable en el suelo. Voluio los ojos llorosos donde los tuuo otro tiempo y vido a la Soberana Madre del niño Cordero.³⁸

As can be seen throughout this analysis, only in *Relación 9* (1614) does a God who is angry at the sins of humankind emerge as the main driving force behind the natural misfortunes sent to try them. Thus, the “hand of God” emerges literally as primarily responsible for the punishments inflicted and the consequent natural scourging of humankind, which causes so much fear in them (note the repetitions and the synonyms used to refer to this feeling in the examples given below: *pauor*, *miedo*, *espanto*). Thus, the expression “the hand of God” would not only be typical of the news pamphlets; it would already be widespread at the time, as recorded in *CORDE* 436 times in 206 documents between c. 1400 and 1689:

Aunque **este açote de la mano de Dios**, entonces fue menor que el que ahora hauemos padecido: porque el Martes por la mañana, dos horas antes que amaneciese, que fue a los diez y seys del mes de Deziembre 1631. En la parte que mira al Mar, en el dicho monte cerca del medio dia de la montaña, haziendo vn terri-ble terremoto, en el dicho tiempo del terremoto se oyeron tres grandes y terribles truenos, que parecia se venían desgajando todos los circunue-zinos montes, cosa jamas vista, y de tanto pauor y miedo, que todos los que habitauan en el monte tuuieron tanto espanto y miedo, que dexando sus casas, hazienda, y quanto tenian, venian huyendo à Napoles, llorando amargamente.³⁹

However, despite the onerous punishments sent by a God who sometimes offers no help, the Catholic faithful will not lose their Christian faith and will look to God himself for consolation and protection. So, the

38. *Ibid.*, ff. 2r-2v.

39. *Aviso 6* (1632), ff. 3r-3v.

noun “remedio(s)” (“remedy/remedies”) is recorded in the corpus with a frequency of 0.06%, while the verb “remediar” (“to remedy”) in its different forms (“remediarlos, remediados, remedia”) is recorded with a frequency of 0.012% in the corpus. Here again, *Relación 9* (1614) stands out, with a frequency of 0.036% of the total number of examples of this noun:

(1) QVIZE dar aviso a v<uestra> m<erced> del fuego que el Martes à los diez y seys de Deziembre se vio en la montaña de Zoma, que fue cre-ciendo de tal suerte, que hazia por el ayre tan grande ruydo que es cosa increíble, con tiros como de Artilleria muy continuos, echando piedras muy gruesas, y ceniza, en tanta cantidad, que formaua en el ayre vna montaña muy grande, que venia ca-minando hàzia esta Ciudad de Napoles, que causò à todos muy grande temor y espanto, y **luego acu-dieron al remedio mas cierto, que es Dios**, hazien-do processiones publicas, y sacaron la Sangre mila-grosa de San Ianuario, muchas Cruces, y Figuras de nuestro Señor Iesu Christo, y de la Virgen san-tissima su madre, nuestra medianera en todas las ne-cessidades, como se ha visto milagrosamente en este incendio, visitando las Iglesias dedicadas à su hon-ra y gloria.⁴⁰

(2) El señor Visorrey embiò vno de los señores del Consejo, y el Comissario de Campaña con dineros, para acudir à los pobres que salian de los lugares à donde estaua el fuego, porque à pedimento del Electo de la Ciudad hauia mandado que no se reci-biessen dentro della, y algunos que boluieron compañía miserablemente quedaron quemados y muertos, por lo qual mouido à lastima reuocò la orden, y con charidad christiana los yuan recibiendo y aposentando, y muchos acudian à pedir limosna para **remediarlos**, movuidos à piedad de las miserias de muchos dellos, que eran muy ricos y poderosos, y no les hauia quedado para comer, sino que de limosna viuian, por ha-zienda.⁴¹

(3) **Remedios deuotissimos contra los terremotos.** CHRISTVS, NOBISCVM, STATE.⁴²

(4) EL Cardenal Baronio en el año 528. Refiere que estando la Ciudad de Antiochia gra-ueamente afligida de terremotos, fue reue-lado a vn grande

40. *Relación 2* (1633), “RELACION VERDA-dera embiada desde Napoles a vn Cauallero desta Ciudad, dandole cuenta del es-pantoso incendio de fuego que ha sucedido en la montaña de Zoma, que està dos leguas poco mas ò menos de la dicha Ciudad de Napoles, y los terremotos que en ella han su-cedido, y el daño que ha causado”, Barcelona, Estevan Liberòs [CBDRS], f. 1v.

41. *Ibid.*, f. 2r.

42. *Aviso 6* (1632), f. 3v.

sieruo de Dios, que si pusiessen encima las puertas, ventanas, y casas, las palabras sobredichas, serian **remediados**.⁴³

(5) [y] si esto no se haze, aurà harta mala ventura, y por bien q<ue> se libren, no dexarà de auer vna carestia muy grande, y vn daño que en muchos años no se ha de boluer a restaurar, si Dios N<uestro> S<eñor> no lo **remedia**.⁴⁴

(6) Alli enterrados gritauan hombres niños y mancebos, sin poderse socorrer, **ni auer si de Dios remedio**.⁴⁵

In short, according to the study carried out on the nouns present in the news pamphlets on natural catastrophes, the indissoluble relationship “human sins – divine wrath – punishment – pity – mercy – forgiveness – remedy” could be established. This pattern was repeated throughout the accounts describing natural tragedies. Only by making humans responsible, and therefore culpable, for disasters of natural origins is it possible to make them aware that they must follow the moral, doctrinal and civil guidelines emanating in almost equal parts from the Church authorities and the monarchy in the 17th century.

2.2. *Lexical resources: adjectivisation*

In order to trace the presence of God through the characterisation of the discourse of disaster of natural origin in news pamphlets, based on the approach of discursive traditions in relation to the figure of the hero, embodied, in this case, by the figure of God, the use of one of the resources identifying this form of discourse – adjectivisation – cannot be overlooked.⁴⁶ In line with this strategy, the analytical superlative is one of the strategies of intensification and valuation in news pamphlets that makes it possible to indicate the feelings of the faithful affected by disasters of natural origins sent by God. For example, the use of the analytical superlative to provide greater emotion and drama in the example in *Relación 2* (1633), which reflects how the people, desperate with “muy lastimosas voces” and “muy de coraçon” ask God for mercy, should be highlighted here.

43. *Ibid.*, f. 3v.

44. *Relación 7* (1624), f. 1v.

45. *Relación 9* (1614), f. 3r.

46. Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

Acompañaron la procesion por su Excelencia, y muchos Caualleros, y llegaron hasta la puerta Capua-na, à vista de la dicha montaña, que se estaua abra-zando, dando el Pueblo **muy lastimosas voces**, pi-diendo à Dios misericordia, con actos de penitencia **muy de coraçon**, confirmándoles con la confession, para lo qual hauia en todas las Iglesias gran numero de Confessores, y aun no eran suficientes para tanta multitud de gente que acudia, [...].⁴⁷

The analytical overlap recorded throughout the corpus analysed is 0.16%. The beginning of *Relación 2* (1633) stands out here. It emphasises the very large size of the stones (“muy gruesas”) and the mountain (“muy grande”) as the most important elements in the natural misfortune sent by “the hand of God”, as well as the fear of the Neapolitan citizens in the face of this catastrophe:

QVIZE dar auiso a v<uestra> m<erced> del fuego que el Martes à los diez y seys de Deziembre se vio en la montaña de Zoma, que fue cre-ciendo de tal suerte, que hazia por el ayre tan grande ruydo que es cosa increíble, con tiros como de Artilleria muy continuos, echando piedras **muy gruesas**, y ceniza, en tanta cantidad, que formaua en el ayre vna montaña **muy grande**, que venia ca-minando hàzia esta Ciudad de Napoles, que causò à todos **muy grande temor y espanto**, y luego acu-dieron al remedio mas cierto, que es Dios, hazien-do procesiones publicas, y sacaron la Sangre mila-grosa de San Ianuario, muchas Cruzes, y Figuras [...].⁴⁸

However, it is the examples of the absolute superlative that strictly characterise the discourse of news pamphlets⁴⁹ and that allow us to identify the relationship between the Christian faithful with their God. This form of superlative, coming from the Italian, had begun to make its way into Spanish by the 17th century⁵⁰ and has remained to the present day. The

47. *Relación 2* (1633), f. 1v.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

50. Carmen Saralegui Platero, “Un aspecto lingüístico de la *Brevissima Relación de la destrucción de las Indias* de Bartolomé de las Casas”, in *Las Indias (América) en la literatura del Siglo de Oro, homenaje a Jesús Cañedo: actas del congreso internacional celebrado en Pamplona, 15-18 de enero de 1992*, ed. by Ignacio Arellano, Pamplona, Gobierno de Navarra, Departamento de Educación y Cultura, 1992, pp. 285-298; Lola Pons Rodríguez, “La doble graduación ‘muy-ísimo’ en la historia del español y su cambio variacional”, in *Estudios de filología y lingüística españolas. Nuevas voces en la disciplina*, ed. by Enrique Pato and Javier Rodríguez Molina, Bern-New York, Peter Lang, 2012, pp. 135-166.

sole purpose of its constant use in news pamphlets is to give the narrative greater emphasis, as it seems that the forms with “-issimo / -issima” were felt to be more expressive than putting the adverb “muy” in front of the adjective:⁵¹

(1) *Remedios **devotissimos** contra los terremotos*. CHRISTVS, NOVBIS-CVM, STATE.⁵²

(2) [y] mojaron en la mar la santa Espina, y manto del glorio-so S<an> Raymundo con vna **solemnissima** procession. Y despues que el tiempo vuo amaynado, hizieron otra **grandissima** procession, y cantaron vn Te Deum, en la Cruz, [...].⁵³

(3) Acudian todos a los Templos, para alivio de su pena, y alcançar de las **piadosissimas** entrañas de Dios misericordia, [...].⁵⁴

(4) Assolose la Iglesia Catedra, siendo de cal y canto, enterrando en sus ruy-nas, su riqueza, y adorno, las **devotissimas** Imágenes, y lo que mas es, el vene-rable Sacramento del Altar, donde asiste la suma, y Sacrosanta persona de Christo Señor Nuestro.⁵⁵

Although it is true that throughout the reports of natural catastrophes the adjectives with negative connotations (“desatado, turbado, lamentable”)⁵⁶ stand out, they do not hide the emotional involvement of the correspondent when it comes to emphasising and highlighting the dimension of the tragedies occurring. The use of the adjective “milagroso” (“miraculous”) stands out in *Relación 10* (1648), with a frequency of 0.008% in the corpus, to tell of the miracle of Saint Francis Xavier. This is where the boundaries of news pamphlets on disasters of natural origin and miracle news pamphlets seem to

51. Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

52. *Aviso 6* (1632), f. 3v.

53. *Relación 8* (1618), f. 1v.

54. *Relación 10* (1648), f. 1r.

55. *Ibid.*

56. “Con suspiros del alma, y **desatado** el coraçon en húmedos raudales, que se exhalan por los ojos en **tiernas**, y **copiosas** lagrimas; **turbado** el pulso, sin acertar a formar linea, ni elo- quente frase, vuelvo à tomar la pluma, para reducir con **lamentables** ecos à vn breve co<m>-pendio las **largas** lástimas, los infortunios muchos que han ex-perimentado algunas Ciudades, y Pueblos de Castilla, Anda-luzia, y la Mancha por todo el discurso del passado mes de Se-tiembre deste año: indicios **mas que ciertos de nuestras graves** culpas, cuya retinencia en ellas ha ocasionado la ira del **Omni-potente** braço de Dios, aunque se ha dexao ver con vn **breve** rasgo de su **Divina** Justicia: [...]” (*Relación 3* (1680), f. 1r).

meet.⁵⁷ Note, then, once again the drama and hyperbole of the story, which directly seeks to arouse the interest and emotion of the audience:

Assolose la Iglesia Catedral, siendo de cal y canto, enterrando en sus ruinas, su riqueza, y adorno, las **devotísimas** Imágenes, y lo que mas es, el **venérable** Sacramento del Altar, donde asiste **la suma, y Sacrosanta** persona de Christo Señor Nuestro. Casi continuado con esta **hermosa** fabrica esta el Palacio **Episcopal, hermoso** edificio i la ruina deste llevó tras si la prenda mas cara, al Padre, y Pastor desta republica, enterrando en sus ruinas al Ilustrissimo señor Don Fray Gaspar de Villarreal, valiò a su Ilustrissima, el alarido del Pueblo que llegó al Cielo, y mas el aver invocado a nuestro Apосто del Oriente San Francisco Xavier, que le favoreció, para que al cabo de muy gran espacio le sacassen, y desenterrasen con vida, mas **ensangrentado, y lastimado** del fracaso. La Iglesia del Colegio de la Compañía, se vino al suelo, y todo el Colegio, en cuyas ruinas quedò sepultado uno de nuestros Sacerdotes: y aviendose arrojado por los corredores a un desvan algunos de Religiosos: quedò sepultado en una celda de las que de arriba cayeron **arruinadas**, el Padre Letor de Artes, y estuvo dos dias en el promontorio de madera, y tierra que desembaraçado para sacar el cuerpo, dio voces para que fuessen con tiento, y hallado, dio cuenta de su tragedia, diziendo, que imbecando el auxilio del Prodigio del Oriente san Francisco Xavier, experimentò su amparo, y a despecho de **densas** nuves de polvo, y maderos, avia conservado la vida; saliò (sic) con ella sin lesion alguna. Este **milagroso** sucesso, y mas el de la Ilustrissima persona del señor Obispo, motivò a su Ilustrissima, y a todo el **afligido** pueblo, que votasse por abogado de los terremotos a tan **milagroso** Patron, y que ordenasse fiestas de guardia su dia.⁵⁸

Thus, the hand of God in the disaster of natural origin news pamphlets is reflected in adjectivisation in the positive and particularly superlative sense, either analytical or synthetic, with special preference for the latter. On the one hand, the connotation of the adjectives used is markedly negative, the result of the tragic content of these accounts in which God punishes, but, as a good hero, also saves. On the other hand, the synthetic superlative, typical of the discourse of the news pamphlets, serves as a tool for emphasis and expressiveness when stressing the great dimensions and consequences of the catastrophes that have occurred, sent by the hand of God.

57. However, according to the classifications of news pamphlets established so far, disaster news pamphlets are distinguished from those dealing with miracles (Pena Sueiro, “Estado de la cuestión”; Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*).

58. *Relación 10* (1648), f. 1v.

2.3. *Lexical resources: adverbs*

The “hand of God” appears once again in the discursive tradition of news pamphlets through the use of certain adverbs. Thus, throughout the entire corpus of selected news pamphlets, the adverb “milagrosamente” (“miraculously”) is predominant, appearing with a frequency of 0.02%. Once again, we are on the narrow boundary separating pamphlets on disasters of natural origin from accounts of miracles, as can be seen in the following cases. In all instances, the presence of this adverb highlights divine intervention that intended to overcome the misfortunes recounted:

- (1) Y se vio que **milagrosamente** Dios nuestro Señor no permitio se acercasse mas de vna milla de la Ciudad, y que venia con tan grande furia, que parecía la hauia de vndir y abrazar, era como viole<n>tada à boluerse compañía, repartiendose en otras partes.⁵⁹
- (2) Y ansi huiendo-se hecho grandes ruynas de casas en la Ciudad, **milagrosamente** fueron libradas las que tuuieron la sobredicha escrituras, con el fauor de Dios. L A V S D E O.⁶⁰

In addition to the fashionable adverb “milagrosamente”, others are documented, such as the evidential “evidentemente” (“clearly”),⁶¹ which, in the example quoted, modifies a verb in the reflexive passive – a tense very commonly used in news pamphlets to add distance from the correspondent, who would attempt to achieve greater objectivity and veracity by not including himself in his own text:⁶²

En llegando la nube en dicha Iglesia de nuestra Señora del Socorro no pudo pasar adelante, y sin q<ue> hiziesse ayre **milagrosamente** era forçada

59. *Relación 2* (1633), f. 2v.

60. *Aviso 6* (1632), f. 3v.

61. Concerning evidentiality, see *Evidentiality in Spanish: Teoría y descripción*, ed. by Ramón González Ruiz, Dámaso Izquierdo Alegría and Óscar Loureda Lamas, Madrid, Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2016; Dámaso Izquierdo Alegría, *Alcances y límites de la evidencialidad: aspectos teóricos y propuesta de análisis aplicada a un conjunto de adverbios evidencialoides del español*, PhD thesis, 2016; Dámaso Izquierdo Alegría, “¿Qué tipo de información codifica realmente un evidencial? Propuesta de una distinción conceptual entre fuente, base y modo de acceso para el reconocimiento de unidades evidenciales”, *Estudios filológicos*, 63 (2019), pp. 211-236; Dámaso Izquierdo Alegría, “La modalidad epistémica en ELE: retos en la descripción de la semántica de varias unidades a partir de una selección de materiales didácticos”, *Culture Crossroads*, 15 (2020), pp. 132-144.

62. Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

à boluer compañía, y queriendo pasar adelante llegando al termino de la dicha Iglesia, boluian à echarla, hasta que se deshazia, y muchos Religiosos y sieruos de Dios afirmaron que el glorioso San Ianuario por intercesion de nuestra Señora hauia alcançado de Dios gracia, que la Ciudad no recibiera daño, y **esto se cono-ce euidentemente**, porque cada mañana y cada noche viene vna nube de fuego y ceniza amenazando-le, y en llegando à la Iglesia de la Virgen del Socorro se buee atrás, y se deshaze.⁶³

The use of adverbs such as “milagrosamente” in the accounts of disasters of natural origin would corroborate the divine intercession in heroically saving the faithful from such calamities sent by God himself. However, other adverbs such as the evidential adverb “euidentemente”, would help to corroborate the veracity of the facts referred to.

2.4. *Lexical resources: repeated discourse*

Samples of religious discourse repeated throughout the news pamphlets have been recorded. Thus, as disasters of natural origins are phenomena that take place in a very limited space of time, surprising the victims, the use of expressions such as “durar un credo” (literally, “to last for as long as it takes to say the Creed”) is repeated throughout the texts studied, as recorded in *Relación 1* (1627), in which this construction is contrasted with “durar por el espacio de” (“last for a period of”) or “durò por el espacio de tres horas interpoladamente” (“it lasted three hours intermittently”):

A Treynta del mes de Julio en Viernes a las doze, poco mas de medio dia, uvo en Napoles y por toda su co-marca un terremoto, **que durò por espacio de un Credo**, y por misericordia del Señor fue sin daño en dicha Ciudad: (sic) pero en el mesmo tiempo le uvo en otras partes, y en particular en la Pulla, donde assolò y destruyò Villas y Ciudades enteras, con señales prodigiosos, y durò por espacio de tres horas interpoladamente.⁶⁴

This same expression can undergo modifications, so that the number of Creeds can vary depending on how long the event being referred to lasted, as can be seen in *Relación 10* (1648). Here, perhaps in an attempt to achieve a degree of stylistic variation, the time period of “en menos de un quarto de hora” (“in less than a quarter of an hour”) is also included:

63. *Relación 2* (1633), f. 3r.

64. *Relación 1* (1627), f. 1v.

RELACION DEL GRAN TERREMOTO, O temblor de tierra que assolò toda la Ciudad de Chile en el nuevo mundo, sin dexar Templos, casas fuertes, ni edificios, que en menos de un quarto de hora no derribasse por el suelo. Escrita por el P<adre> Iuan Gonçalez Chaparro de la Compañia de Iesus. Descuidados estavan del peligro que les amenaçava, los moradores de la Ciudad de Santiago de Chile, quando a las diez de la noche Lunez treze de Mayo de mil seiscientos y quarenta y siete, sobrevino un temblor, y terremoto tan horrible, y espantoso, **que en menos de quatro credos**, assolò, y derribò todos los edificios de la miserable Ciudad, no dexando en toda ella piedra sobre piedra con tan desozada comoción de tierra que sacudien-do aun de sus subterráneos los mas fuertes fundamentos, los dexo inhábiles para poderse reedificar sobre ellos.⁶⁵

In the same vein, other expressions referring to God and repeated throughout the news pamphlets are “Por misericordia del Señor” (“By the mercy of the Lord”):⁶⁶

A Treynta del mes de Iulio en Viernes a las doze, poco mas de medio dia, uvo en Napoles y por toda su co-marca un terremoto, que durò por espacio de un Credo, y **por misericordia del Señor** fue sin daño en dicha Ciudad: [...].⁶⁷

Thus, in repeated discourse, the commendations to God stand out, in which the noun “mano” (“hand”) is used once again. This time, it is not responsible for inflicting God’s punishment, but rather helps humankind. However, it is true that the variant “brazo/braço” (“arm”) is also recorded in the corpus, this time to emphasise “la ira del Omnipotente braço de Dios” (“the wrath of God’s almighty arm”):

(1) El Señor por su misericordia **nos tenga a todos de su mano**, y nos de muerte prevenida. LAVS DEO.⁶⁸

(2) La magestad Diuina **nos tenga de su diuina mano**.⁶⁹

(3) [i]ndicios mas que ciertos de nuestras graves culpas, cuya retinencia en ellas ha ocasionado **la ira del Omni-potente braço de Dios**, aunque se ha dexao ver con vn breve rasgo de su Divina Justicia: [...].⁷⁰

65. *Relación 10* (1648), f. 1r.

66. It is striking that, between 1400 and 1700, *CORDE* records only four examples of this expression in two documents (in 1600 and 1604).

67. *Relación 1* (1627), f. 1v.

68. *Ibid.*, f. 3r.

69. *Relación 2* (1633), f. 3v.

70. *Relación 3* (1680), f. 1r.

2.5. Discursive resources: comparisons

Among the discursive resources that highlight the presence of God in disasters of natural origins, comparisons, often introduced by the verb “parecer” (“to seem” or “to appear”), stand out, with a frequency of 0.036% throughout the texts analysed. This discursive procedure, already noted,⁷¹ is intended to ensure that the audience understands the dimensions of the event that occurred. We have previously stated, and it hardly needs to be pointed out here, that the selected pamphlets directly interpret natural misfortune as a punishment from God. This can be seen in *Relación 7* (1624), in which this reading is made through a parenthetical comment by the correspondent introduced by the verb of attenuation “parecer”:⁷²

(1) Dize el Licenciado Pedro de la Huerta Consejero en el Consejo de Flandes, q<ue> en Ola<n>da se han anegado mas de quarenta villas y lugares grandes y pequeños, que es grande lastima verlo, otros dizen, son mas de sesenta: y **parece castigo de Dios N<uestro> S<eñor>** porque los herejes q<ue> ay en la dicha tierra, aunque ay muchos Catolicos entre ellos, querian ro<m>per los diques y fortalezas de la dicha tierra para anegar muchos pueblos, villas y lugares del Rey don Felipe N<uestro> S<eñor> que son Catolicos, para que no les entrasse trigo, ni otra cosa para sustentarse.⁷³

(2) [y] por el ayre en algunos lugares de la Pulla se sintieron bozes dolorosas, las quales por el grande rumor y alboroto de la gente, no pudieron ser bien

71. Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

72. Marta Albelda Marco, “¿Cómo se reconoce la atenuación? Una aproximación metodológica basada en el español peninsular hablado”, in *(Des)cortesía en español. Espacios teóricos y metodológicos para su estudio*, ed. by Franca Orletti and Laura Mariottini, Rome-Stockholm, Università Roma Tre-Stockholm University, 2010, pp. 41-70.

73. *Relación 7* (1624), f. 1v. In this case, divine punishment is explained to the recipient in no uncertain terms. Thus, the argument offered to the audience would be logical according to the common thinking of the time: God punishes the Protestant heretics because they wanted to break the dikes to flood the villages of Catholics under the authority of Philip II, so that they would have no food to put in their mouths. This same pamphlet once again mentions divine punishment, which is by no means accidental, as God himself, “volente” (“deliberately”), has sent such punishment to the Protestants. This example serves here to understand the human hand in the form of the authorities of the time (Church and monarchy) in writing news pamphlets. Although they did not directly control the population, they tried to guide their thinking through this political and religious proto-propaganda by publicising events that took place beyond the natural borders of the Iberian Peninsula from a strictly Catholic perspective (Iraceburu Jiménez, “Las relaciones de sucesos”).

entendidas, de suerte que **parecia un juyzio final, como lo fue, para aquellas pobres almas que saltaron, cuyo numero por agora no puede saberse.**⁷⁴

(3) Temerosos los vezinos con tal golpe, [...] pues desairadas las nubes en copiosas lluvias, **parecia querian renouar al passado diluuiuo**, ò desatadose el mar, que en breve lo fueron todos los campos del termino, y calles de(s)ta Villa [...].⁷⁵

(4) Y al cabo de tantos traba-jos fue nuestro Señor seruido de embiar vna tempestad por la mar con vna con-trauanda de vientos, **que parecia acabarse el mundo**, [...].⁷⁶

2.6. Discursive resources: adjective subordination

Linked to the profusion of adjectivisation in the news pamphlets (see above), the abundant presence of adjective subordination throughout the corpus studied also stands out. It emerges with a frequency of 2.4% of cases, including the identification of God with the only salvation, in this case “el remedio mas cierto” (“the most certain remedy”):

QVIZE dar auiso a v<uestra> m<erced> del fuego que el Martes à los diez y seys de Deziembre se vio en la montaña de Zoma, [...] que causò à todos muy grande temor y espanto, y **luego acu-dieron al remedio mas cierto, que es Dios**, [...].⁷⁷

2.7. Discursive resources: parenthetical comments

Another discursive strategy that allows us to study the influence of God, either in his more vindictive aspect or in his more pious one, involves the parenthetical comments, also frequent in news pamphlets.⁷⁸ Often, these are merely interpretations and clarifications by the correspondents themselves, unthinkable in the modern press:

(1) *RELACION DEL ADMIRABLE HVRACAN Y ESPANTOSO TERREMOTO DE AGVA*, Y viento (**que por secretos juyzios de Dios nuestro Señor**) vino so-bre la Ciudad de Granada. [...].⁷⁹

74. *Relación 1* (1627), f. 3r.

75. *Relación 3* (1680), f. 2v.

76. *Relación 8* (1618), f. 1v.

77. *Relación 2* (1633), f. 1v.

78. Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

79. *Relación 4* (1629), “*RELACION DEL ADMIRABLE HVRACAN Y ESPANTOSO TERREMOTO DE AGVA*, Y viento (que por secretos juyzios de Dios nuestro

(2) Dize el Licenciado Pedro de la Huerta Consejero en el Consejo de Flandes, q<ue> en Ola<n>-da se han anegado mas de quarenta villas y lugares grandes y pequeños, que es grande lastima verlo, otros dizen, son mas de sesenta: y parece castigo de Dios N<uestro> S<eñor> [...].⁸⁰

3. Conclusions

This study has attempted to analyse the presence of “the hand of God” in Spanish news pamphlets on disasters of natural origins via the different lexico-discursive strategies carried out by the correspondents in ten selected event reports, written by unknown authors, as is usually the case with most examples of this type of document.

In this way, the analysis has shown how divine intervention (and specifically, God’s wrath) gave a reason, as well as protection and remedy to the faithful, in the face of serious disaster of natural origins (earthquakes, floods or fires, among other natural catastrophes). Thus, the ultimate goal of these news sheets was to publicise these fateful events throughout Europe, not only to make these misfortunes known, but also to explain their ultimate cause (the sins of man) to the most avid readers and listeners.

Through the analysis of the lexico-discursive strategies used in the texts that make up the selected corpus, it has become clear how the anonymous authors of these documents seemed to follow their own discursive forms, in this case, that of the discursive tradition of news pamphlets.⁸¹ This undoubtedly streamlined the writing of these texts, in which the strong imprint of the Church can be noted, given the need to narrate and publicise the disasters of the time from a strictly religious point of view.

The use of different names of God by means of nouns, as well as the repetition of certain adjectives, adverbs, fixed expressions, comparisons and parenthetical comments identifying a specific type of discourse (that of news pamphlets on disasters of natural origin) has made it possible to

Señor) vino so-bre la Ciudad de Granada. Dase quenta de las muertes, y perdidas. Y diligencias que el señor su Arçobispo con sus limosnas hizo. Y trabajos q<ue> el señor Cor-regidor, y Real Audiencia, y todos los minis-tros passaron para el remedio della. En este año de 1629”, Sevilla, Juan de Cabrera [EXPOBUS], f. 1r.

80. *Relación* 7 (1624), f. 1v.

81. Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

highlight the strong social, cultural and especially religious connotations at the time of disasters of natural origins.⁸² Thus, by means of linguistic strategies that introduced “the hand of God” into news pamphlets, it was possible to convince the popular audience of the responsibility of their sins for such misfortunes sent from the heavens, although it is true that, most of the time, this same hand of God also offered remedy, salvation and even miracles.

In this context, this study has made it possible to show how accounts of disasters of natural origins seem to follow a double discursive mould of their own: on the one hand, they conform to the news pamphlet discursive tradition, and, on the other, they adapt to the discursive form of disasters of natural origin news pamphlets according to the studies carried out by Iglesias Castellano.⁸³ The linguistic elements that would make it possible to characterise the relations of events of natural catastrophes in which “the hand of God” is involved would, as far as the lexicon is concerned, be:

- 1) Nouns, with a predominance of terms like “wrath”, “mercy”, “pity”, “punishment”, (final) “judgement”, “sin(s)” and “remedy”/“remedies”.
- 2) Profuse adjectivisation, with a marked negative connotation (“troubled”, “lamentable”, “afflicted”) and among which the use of the adjective “miraculous” stands out, which would ignite a debate on the boundaries between disaster of natural origin news pamphlets and accounts of miracles.
- 3) The analytical adjective superlative (“muy lastimosas voces, muy de corazón”) and especially synthetic superlatives (“remedios deuotísimos, solemnísima procesion, grandísima procesion, piadosisimas entrañas”). The latter would serve as a sign of the linguistic change that was taking place in the Spanish language and which was already becoming established in the 17th century⁸⁴ as a resource of greater emphasis and expressiveness used in news pamphlets to capture the attention of recipients.

82. *Disaster Narratives*; Cecere, “*Subterranea conspiración*”; Schiano, “Las relaciones de desastres”.

83. Abel Iglesias Castellano, “La interpretación de las catástrofes naturales en el siglo XVII”, *Ab initio*, 8 (2013), pp. 87-120.

84. Saralegui Platero, “Un aspecto lingüístico”; Pons Rodríguez, “La doble graduación ‘muy-isimo’”; Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

4) Adverbs, and in particular the use of the fashionable adverb “milagrosamente” (“miraculously”).

5) The repeated discourse shown in the disaster of natural origin news pamphlets with the repetition of expressions like “durò por espacio de un Credo” (“it lasted as long as a Creed”), which may well be subject to a change of numeral: “en menos de quatro credos” (“in less than four Creeds”) or “nos tenga a todos de su (diuina) mano” (“may he hold us all in his [divine] hand”).

As far as the discursive strategies that would allow for a linguistic definition of the discursive tradition of disasters of natural origin news pamphlets (Table 1), the following are the most important:

1) Comparisons, often introduced by the verb “parecer” (“to seem” or “to appear”). In the cases given here, disasters of natural origins are likened to the Final Judgement, the end of the world or a new flood.

2) Adjective subordination, typical of news pamphlets, characterised by the use of long sentence periods due to the eagerness to provide the most painstaking details in the narrative.⁸⁵ An example of this type of subordination would be the testimony “y luego acudieron al remedio mas cierto, que es Dios” (“and then they turned to the most certain remedy, which is God”), in which God, like an epic hero, is identified as the only salvation for human beings.

3) Parenthetical comments, which in turn belong to the discursive tradition of news pamphlets.⁸⁶ Through them, the correspondent for these documents tries to clarify and explain the information referred to in order to clear up any doubts that may arise among its audience or readers. This discursive resource would be unthinkable in today’s press, where the correspondent must be noticed as little as possible.

Having outlined those lexico-discursive characteristics, making it possible to define the form of discourse in disasters of natural origin news pamphlets in which “the hand of God” is constantly shown, it remains to see whether there are other discursive forms within the discursive tradition constituted by news pamphlets.⁸⁷ In other words, to look at discursive forms

85. Iraceburu Jiménez, *Estudio pragmadiscursivo*.

86. *Ibid.*

87. *Ibid.*

Table 1. Representation of the lexicon in disaster of natural origin news pamphlets

Term	Number of occurrences	Normalised frequency (per million)
<i>remedio</i>	15	0.06%
<i>misericordia</i>	9	0.04%
<i>castigo</i>	8	0.03%
<i>piedad</i>	5	0.02%
<i>milagrosamente</i>	5	0.02%
<i>pecados</i>	4	0.016%
<i>ira</i>	3	0.012%
<i>juzio final</i>	3	0.012%
<i>castigar</i>	2	0.008%
<i>milagroso</i>	2	0.008%
<i>perdón</i>	2	0.008%

of the news pamphlets covering military battles, royal entries, royal weddings, royal deaths, canonisations, martyrdoms and so on. It is certainly true that the use of the discursive form of news pamphlets on disasters of natural origin made it possible to speed up the drafting of these documents so they could be taken to the printing press more quickly. This helped achieve the widest possible circulation of their content and also facilitated the translation of these reports [see *Relación 1 (1627)*]⁸⁸ and their dissemination everywhere in Europe where the inhabitants feared God but trusted in his intercession and heroic salvation.

As for the rhetorical resources used in this type of report, the inclusion of miracles is notable (see that of St Gennaro in Naples⁸⁹ or St Francis Xavier in Chile⁹⁰).

The use of these lexical and discursive resources undoubtedly corresponds to the propagandistic function (in this case of religious significance) of the news pamphlets. It was of interest to give information on the misfortunes that occurred, either within the Iberian Peninsula or outside it, but it was more pressing to delve into the ultimate cause of these

88. “RELACION VERDADERA DE LOS espantosos y notables daños que hizo un grande terremoto en la Pulla parte del Reyno de Napoles, a 30.de Julio 1627. Traduzido de Toscano en Castellano de un memorial imbiado de Italia a un Religioso grave de la Orden de san Francisco desta Ciudad de Barcelona”: *Relación 1 (1627)*, f. 1r.

89. See *Relación 2 (1633)*.

90. See *Relación 10 (1648)*.

tragedies: the sins of humankind that arouse the wrath of God, whose hand does not tremble when it comes to punishing his faithful in the cruellest way. News pamphlets are therefore established as an instrument of social control⁹¹ over a mostly illiterate population⁹² who blindly believed the news that came to them in the pamphlets, either in the public square or by reading them themselves (only in some privileged cases). Both then and now, the population could only be contained through intimidation. In this way, the system into which disaster of natural origin news pamphlets fit is established:

Sins of humankind → divine wrath → divine punishment (disaster of natural origins) → mercy → remedy

For all these reasons, it can be said that behind “the hand of God” present in the news pamphlets would be the hand of the Church which, together with the monarchy, established strong ideological and social control over the news pamphlets of the time.⁹³ In any case, this is a first linguistic approach to the Spanish discourse of news pamphlets on disasters of natural origin using a corpus that should be expanded in future studies, in which a larger number of documents should be considered. It would also be interesting to extrapolate this analysis to disaster of natural origin news pamphlets in other languages, along the lines of the *DisComPoSE* study group, and also picking up Ettinghausen’s call for a pan-European study of the forerunners of today’s press.⁹⁴

91. Maite Iraceburu Jiménez, “Las relaciones de sucesos como instrumento de control: el caso de los antimodelos femeninos”, *Memoria y Civilización*, 22 (2019), 543-572.

92. Henry Ettinghausen, “Hacia una tipología de la prensa española del siglo XVII: de hard news a soft porn”, in *Studia Aurea. Minutes of the 3rd AISO Congress* (Toulouse, 1993), ed. by Ignacio Arellano, Carmen Pinillos, Marc Vitse and Frédéric Serralta, 3 vols, vol. I, Pamplona, Universidad de Navarra, GRISO (Grupo de Investigación Siglo de Oro), 1996, pp. 51-56.

93. Think of Philip II’s *Pragmática* of 1627. See Sagrario López Poza, “Relaciones impresas (años 1632-1642) sobre el Cardenal Infante don Fernando de Austria”, in *Las relaciones de sucesos en los cambios políticos y sociales de la Europa moderna*, ed. by Jorge García López and Sònia Boadas, Barcelona, Studia Aurea Monográfica, 2015, pp. 141-162.

94. Henry Ettinghausen, “Relaciones internacionales: las relaciones de sucesos, un fenómeno paneuropeo”, in *Las relaciones de sucesos*, pp. 13-27.

GENNARO SCHIANO

“Tú sola siempre nuestro amparo has sido”:
The Prayer to the Virgin in the *Llanto de Menardo*
by Duarte Núñez de Acosta*

1. *Pro serenitate*

Over the centuries of the early modern period, the global climate was influenced by the effects of what is known as the Little Ice Age.¹ A major, widespread drop in temperature was accompanied by an unprecedented alternation of heavy, torrential rainfall and exceptionally dry seasons. In Spain, this particular climatic situation had devastating effects on a hydrography that was already endemically problematic: the rivers suffered long periods of drought that alternated with episodes of tragic flooding. Lack of water was a much more frequent problem and had decidedly more severe consequences for the daily life of the affected communities.²

* This work was supported by the *DisComPoSE* project (*Disasters, Communication and Politics in Southwestern Europe*), which has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement No. 759829).

1. The most recent and illuminating studies on climate change in the early modern period and on the effects of the Little Ice Age are those of Armando Alberola Romá, together with the results of the projects he directed at the University of Alicante. See, in particular, Armando Alberola Romá, “Riadas, inundaciones y desastres en el sur valenciano a finales del siglo XVIII”, *Papeles de Geografía*, 51-52 (2010), pp. 23-32; Armando Alberola Romá, *Quan la pluja no sap ploure. Sequeres i riuades al País Valencià en l’Edat Moderna*, Valencia, Publicacions de la Universitat de Valencia, 2010; Armando Alberola Romá, *Los cambios climáticos. La Pequeña edad del hielo en España*, Madrid, Cátedra, 2014.

2. The data on the rogations for the *Virgen de la Vega* in Salamanca demonstrate that in the first half of the 17th century there were episodes of drought in 1622, 1630, 1636, 1637, 1638, 1639, 1643, 1645, 1646 and 1648, whereas the only rogations due to floods are those relating to the *riada* of San Policarpo. See Rafael Sánchez Pascual, *La señora del Tormes Santa María de la Vega. Patrona de Salamanca y su tierra*, Salamanca, Sánchez Pascual, 1991, p. 77.

Despite this, the floods apparently had a greater appeal among the various informative genres of the Spanish Golden Age, frequently evolving into fascinating mediatic events.

However, the flow of communication, information and narration unleashed by the floods was not due only to the dramatic tales of entire cities submerged beneath the waters and the impact of these tragic images on a mentality, such as that of the *cultura de cordel*, sensitised to the realms of the monstrous and the horrific.³ In an economy that was still intensely dependent on the river basins, flooding and overflows could cause irreversible damage to the social fabric of the cities directly affected and to the surrounding areas.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the *relato noticioso* provide remarkable evidence of the management practices developed over time to contain the floods. The recurrence of a natural phenomenon that was clearly more familiar than rarer catastrophes allowed both the political and ecclesiastical authorities to elaborate increasingly efficient responses. While the pioneering measures of prevention and action of political authorities gradually came to resemble a policy for managing the floods,⁴ the religious manifestations cast light on the consolidation of known and shared practices of devotion in the form of rogations *ad petendam pluviam* and *pro serenitate*.

3. On the sensational imaginary of the *Literatura de cordel* and the *generos noticiosos*, see Alberto Natale, *Gli specchi della paura. Il sensazionale e il prodigioso nella letteratura di consumo (secoli XVII-XVIII)*, Rome, Carocci, 2008; *Las relaciones de sucesos: relatos fácticos, oficiales y extraordinarios*, ed. by Patrick Bégrand, Besançon, Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2006; Claudia Verónica Carranza Vera, *De la realidad a la maravilla: motivos y recursos de lo sobrenatural en relaciones de sucesos hispánicas (S. XVII)*, San Luis de Potosí, El Colegio de San Luis, 2014; Henry Ettinghausen, “Sexo y violencia: noticias sensacionalistas en la prensa española del siglo XVII”, *Edad de Oro*, 12 (1993), pp. 95-107; Henry Ettinghausen, *Noticias del siglo XVII. Relaciones españolas de sucesos naturales y sobrenaturales*, Barcelona, Puvill, 1995; Henry Ettinghausen, “Hacia una tipología de la prensa española del siglo XVII: de ‘Hard News’ a ‘Soft Porn’”, *Actas del III Congreso de la AISO (Toulouse, 1993)*, ed. by Ignacio Arellano, Toulouse-Pamplona, 1996, pp. 51-66; Henry Ettinghausen, “La prensa preperiódica española y el Barroco”, in *Géneros editoriales y relaciones de sucesos en la Edad Moderna*, ed. by Pedro Manuel Cátedra and María Eugenia Díaz Tena, Salamanca, SIERS-SEMYR, 2013, pp. 89-102.

4. An excellent historical and theoretical overview of the development of a culture for managing the hydrography and the floods is in Christian Rohr, “Floods of the Upper Danube River and Its Tributaries and Their Impact on Urban Economies (c. 1350-1600): The Examples of the Towns of Krems/Stein and Wels (Austria)”, *Environment and History*, 19/2 (2013), pp. 133-148.

Such elements clearly moulded the features of this particular type of catastrophe narration.⁵ While the news of earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions displayed the traits of portentous events, poised between horror and wonder, in the early modern information network, floods were seen as more ordinary – more human – occurrences. This aspect, for instance, surfaces in the detailed description of the reactions of the affected communities: from the anxious waiting for the arrival of the flood after days of rain to the shock of seeing mansions and streets submerged by water. It is even more clearly present in the discussions about the causes of the disaster and the attribution of blame – not only to heaven and its unfathomable plans – but even more to the institutions and their ways of managing and preventing the calamities. If, as demonstrated by numerous narrations of the floods, God's will and man's impious conduct are not the only reasons that can explain the disaster, the perspective evidently shifts to other causes and other possible responsibilities. On the one hand, these attempt to offer more rational and logical reflections on the occurrence, for instance, by exploring whether the institutions did everything that was in their power. On the other hand, they polarise the conventional space allocated to the action of the institutions in times of calamity, bringing to the fore heroes and anti-heroes that enliven an actantial structure almost always reduced to the battle between natural elements and the victims of the disaster. There is a particularly memorable example in one of the passages of the *relación* by Valerio Finardo on the flooding of the Tormes in 1626. In the story told by the *bachiller* of the University of Salamanca, the city nobles and the representatives of the institutions are portrayed as heroic figures ready to sacrifice their lives for the safety of the people:

Mostraron bien en esta ocasión los caballeros su mucho valor y nobleza, no faltando en tan grande conflicto con su ayuda y amparo, remediando muchas vidas. Entre los cuales dieron muestras de sus generosos pechos y ánimos don Alonso de Bracamonte, sacando a caballo a mucha gente conflictiva con grande peligro de su vida. Y don Baltasar de Herrera acudiendo al socorro de muchas necesidades con sustento y orden que la ciudad le dio, como a regidor, y don

5. On the forms and *topoi* of disaster narration in the early modern era, see *Pestes, incendies, naufrages. Écritures du désastre au dix-septième siècle*, ed. by Françoise Lavocat, Turnhout, Brepols, 2011; *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture*, ed. by Domenico Cecere, Chiara De Caprio, Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Pasquale Palmieri, Rome, Viella, 2018; Gennaro Schiano, *Relatar la catástrofe en el Siglo de Oro. Entre noticia y narración*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2021.

Joseph de Anaya (que en infinitos peligros a que acudió, dando socorro y nadando, por sacar mucha gente en sus hombros y niños), estuvo tantas veces con peligro conocidísimo de su vida.⁶

2. *The riada de San Policarpo*

On the feast of St Polycarp on 26 January 1626, the city of Salamanca and the surrounding areas were struck by prolonged torrential rain that fatally swelled the bed of the Tormes River. According to coeval testimony, by afternoon the river had already risen beyond normal levels and, as night fell, it broke its banks, flooding the *vega* and entering the city gates. The most severe damage was caused to the religious buildings situated on the banks of the river, from the church of Santísima Trinidad (now the Iglesia vieja del Arrabal), unluckily located close to the Zurguén stream, to the San Andrés convent of the discalced Carmelites. As is known, the flood of 1626 also caused irreparable damage to the ancient Roman bridge due to the violence of the water crashing into its famous arches, also greatly complicating communications and rescue operations between the two banks. However, it was the destruction of the religious buildings beyond the walls that definitively altered the urban identity of Salamanca. In effect, the authorities took advantage of the dramatic event to impose a different management of the previously unregulated construction of convents and churches. After the flood – and as a preventive measure in the event of future calamities – these religious edifices were definitively established inside the city walls.⁷

The *riada de San Policarpo* was the subject of extraordinary attention in the media of the time, and in particular in the genre of the *relaciones de sucesos*.⁸ There are no less than twelve publications devoted to the

6. Valerio Finardo, *Relación cierta y verdadera de la gran crecida que tuvo y ruina que causó el río Tormes en la ciudad de Salamanca, en 26 de enero deste año de 1626*, Valladolid, Viuda de Córdoba, 1626 [Biblioteca Nacional de España: MSS 2358, ff. 350v-351r].

7. See Emilia Montaner López, “Aportaciones a la historia del urbanismo. Salamanca en el siglo XVII”, *Salamanca: revista de estudios*, 24-25 (1987), pp. 9-28.

8. As is known, the *relaciones de sucesos* were works of an informative-literary character designed to offer a generally synthetic narration of an occurrence of urgent relevance: political events, wars, festivals and aristocratic parades, miracles, grotesque news

Salamanca flood, published both in the city itself and elsewhere in Spain (Barcelona, Valladolid and Seville).⁹ A further demonstration of the interest in the tragic fate of the city is an extraordinary *pliego* published in Lima by the printer Jerónimo de Contreras, which recounts both the flood of Salamanca and the disaster caused in Seville by the Guadalquivir that took place at around the same time at the end of January 1626. This illustrates both the evident relation between the two catastrophes and the major attraction that disasters held for the public of the time.¹⁰

stories and natural catastrophes. The variety of subject-matter was matched by a remarkable diversity of form that was intrinsically tied up with the sources of the news and the editorial and literary function of the text. The *relaciones* could be in prose or verse and were usually printed in the economic format of *pliegos sueltos*, that is, pamphlets of two or four pages. However, there are also numerous examples of *relaciones largas*, which, as well as being longer, were also editorial products of a different kind, often embellished with poetic appendages by illustrious authors. The origins and sources of the specific composition of the *relaciones* were also diversified: from the purely informative prose of the institutional communication and the manuscript notices (*avvisi*, gazettes etc...), to the narrative verse forms deriving from *romance noticiero* and the ancestral informative character of the *cantares*. Although they had already circulated in manuscript form, they became a codified and recognisable genre when they began to be printed and reached their maximum circulation between the end of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th. See Victor Infantes, “¿Qué es una relación? (Divagaciones varias sobre una sola divagación)”, in *Las relaciones de sucesos en España (1500-1750)*, ed. by María Cruz García de Enterría, Henry Ettinghausen, Víctor Infantes and Agustín Redondo, Paris-Alcalá de Henares, Publications de la Sorbonne- Servicio de publicaciones de la Universidad de Alcalá, 1996, pp. 203-216; Mario Infelise, *Prima dei giornali. Alle origini della pubblica informazione*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2002; María Cruz García de Enterría, “Historia y géneros de la S.I.E.R.S.: un ‘portal’ no informático para un coloquio”, in *Encuentro de civilizaciones (1500-1750). Informar, narrar, celebrar*, ed. by Tonina Paba, Alcalá de Henares, Universidad de Alcalá, 2003, pp. 13-20; Henry Ettinghausen, “How the Press Began: The Pre-Periodical Printed News in Early Modern Europe”, *Janus*, Suppl. 3 (2015).

9. See Jacobo Sanz Hermida, *La avenida de Santa Bárbara (1498) y otras famosas crecidas del Tormes. Historia y literatura*, Salamanca, Europa Artes Gráficas, 1997, pp. 54-63; Schiano, *Relatar la catástrofe*, pp. 185-186.

10. See Juan Beltrán de la Cueva, *Relación verdadera en que se da cuenta de todo el daño que causó las crecientes del río Guadalquivir en la ciudad de Sevilla y Triana, este año de 1626*, Lima, Jerónimo de Contreras, 1626. The text was recently published in a modern edition by Carlota Fernández Travieso, “Las crecientes del Guadalquivir en Sevilla y Triana y la avenida del Tormes en Salamanca en 1626”, in *Malas noticias y noticias falsas. Estudio y edición de relaciones de sucesos (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, ed. by Valentina Nider and Nieves Pena Sueiro, Trento, Università degli Studi di Trento, 2019, pp. 89-110.

The characteristics and interest of these *relaciones* can firstly be explained by considering who most of their authors were: namely, those very university students who – as illustrated in the history of Salamanca by Villar y Macías (1887) – by dint of brawls and binges had come to be seen as enemies of public order.¹¹ However, on this occasion, the students distinguished themselves not only as the heroes of the rescue operations but also as valuable eyewitnesses and chroniclers of the catastrophe. No less than seven of the twelve known *relaciones* on the flood of 1626 were written by students at the university, so it is scarcely surprising that this series of works displays very particular genre features. The origins, cultural influences and literary pretensions of the young writers mould the style of the texts, crossing them with heterogenous metres and sources. For instance, the *relaciones* by Pedro Íñiguez Colodro de Guereña¹² (1626) and Antonio Álvarez¹³ (1626?) mingle the typical features of informative prose with formulas and *topoi* from coeval poetry. Colodro de Guereña adopts a lyrical form that evidently imitates the schema of the solemn *canción* of Herrera stamp, with a predominance of hendecasyllables over septenaries.¹⁴ Instead, in *Cisne negro* Álvarez uses the epic stylistic features of the octave that lends itself perfectly to the encomiastic tenor of a work that repeatedly exalts the action of the institutions in heroic tones: “Cuando el acierto del pretor divino, / que pudiera envidiar cónsul romano, / a la dificultad abrió camino / con presto ingenio y diligente mano”.

11. Manuel Villar y Macías, *Historia de Salamanca*, 2 vols, Salamanca, Imprenta de Francisco Núñez Izquierdo, 1887.

12. Pedro Íñiguez Colodro de Guereña, *Relación en canciones reales a la inundación y avenida de el río Tormes en esta ciudad de Salamanca a 26 de enero de este año de 1626*, Salamanca, Diego Cussio, 1626.

13. Antonio Álvarez, *Cisne negro. Poema trágico, de las inundaciones del Tormes y estragos de Salamanca en 26 de enero y 12 de febrero de 1626 años*, Salamanca, Diego Cussio, 1626, f. 2r, ll. 145-148. On the literary representation of the Salamanca floods, see the studies of Sanz Hermida, *La avenida de Santa Bárbara; Por las riberas del Tormes: cancionero recopilado de los más ilustres poetas de todos los tiempos*, ed. by Jacobo Sanz Hermida, Salamanca, Promodeico, 2000; Javier San José Lera, *Silva para una inundación, la de Salamanca en 1626*, Salamanca, SEMYR, 2004. See also Gennaro Schiano, “Las relaciones de desastres naturales entre género y texto. El caso de la riada de San Policarpo (Salamanca, 1626)”, *Cuadernos AISPI*, 15 (2020), pp. 209-226; Schiano, *Relatar la catástrofe*, pp. 75-108.

14. On the structure of the *canción* and its various typologies, see the classic study of Rudolf Baehr, *Manual de versificación española*, Madrid, Gredos, 1970, pp. 319-329.

3. *The Llanto de Menardo, between pastoral poetry and relaciones de desastres*

The poem called the *Llanto de Menardo* (1626) in some respects resembles the compositions by Colodro de Guereña and Álvarez, both because it combines the forms of informative prose with those of poetry and because it too was written by one of the students at the University of Salamanca who became unwonted witnesses of the tragedy. The author, Duarte Núñez de Acosta, born in Faro in Portugal,¹⁵ is principally known as a doctor in the service of Juan José de Austria and as a writer of treatises.¹⁶ However, he also wrote poetry and in fact took part in the *justas poéticas* and *certamina*; he wrote principally in Latin,¹⁷ although evidence of his production in Castilian – especially occasional or religious poetry – can also be found in several printed and manuscript miscellanies.¹⁸

15. Duarte's Portuguese origins and the study of medicine suggest that he was from a Jewish family. This theory is confirmed in the only monograph on the author by Luis Charlo Brea, *Poesías latinas del doctor Duarte Núñez de Acosta*, Cádiz, Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad de Cádiz, 1993, and by numerous studies on the students and the university world of Salamanca in the Golden Age. Rodríguez San Pedro Bezares has explained how the medical profession in Portugal retained the stamp of Jewish ancestry. Seventy per cent of the Portuguese students at the Salamanca Faculty of Medicine during the 16th and 17th centuries were *marranos*. By moving to Castile, these Portuguese crypto-Jews were able to elude the Inquisition in their country, but not to avoid Jewish insults from other students at Salamanca. Most of these medical students came from Alentejo and Algarve, where there were important communities of converts practicing medicine (Luis Enrique Rodríguez San Pedro Bezares, "Universidades europeas del Renacimiento", in *La Universidad contemporánea*, ed. by Luis Enrique Rodríguez San Pedro Bezares and Juan Luis Polo Rodríguez, Salamanca, Publicaciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2008, pp. 43-58: 54). The crypto-Jewish hypothesis is also confirmed by the evident passion for Old Testament imagery that emerges in Duarte's sacred production and, as we shall see, in the *Llanto de Menardo*.

16. See Duarte Núñez de Acosta, *Tratado práctico del uso de las sangrías así en las enfermedades particulares, como en las calenturas: explicase el artificio metódico de la cura racional con que Galeno procede, y los demás autores*, Trigueros, Diego Perez de Estupiñán, 1653; Duarte Núñez de Acosta, *Luminar menor, en que ventilan las cuestiones de purgar los humores que hacen decúbito arriba; y sangrar del brazo en los afectos superiores pendientes de fluxión*, n.p., 1674.

17. The *Quaestio de insonniis*, a didactic poem which earned him the title of *bachiller* at the university (see Charlo Brea, *Poesías Latinas*, pp. 41-50), is in Latin, as is a poem in hexameters dealing with the Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529, *El poema heroico* (see Charlo Brea, *Poesías Latinas*, pp. 115-150).

18. The most famous is definitely the *Templo panegírico* by Fernando de la Torre Farfán (1663), which includes no less than seven works by Duarte: Fernando de la Torre

Also in Castilian is the *Llanto de Menardo*, a youthful work in 64 octaves on the subject of the *riada de San Policarpo* published in the same year of 1626 by Diego de Cossio, one of the Salamanca printers most active in the production and circulation of *impresos de cordel* and *relaciones de sucesos*. Only one printed exemplar of this edition has survived, and it is missing the last twenty-two octaves.¹⁹ However, a manuscript copy of the text has also come down to us in the posthumous anthology dedicated to Duarte by his son Diego Tenorio de León in 1685, which contains the complete works of his father in both Latin and Castilian.²⁰

The *Llanto* is a *relación de suceso* in verse,²¹ the principal purpose of which is to recount the facts of the tragedy. In effect, the narration stretching over the 64 octaves reconstructs anecdotes and episodes that we find in other works on the flood. It dwells in detail on the damage caused by the disaster and for much of the text follows the recurrent chronotope of the baleful night: from the rising of the waters to the arrival of the devastating wave from the river, and from the terror-stricken hours of the night to the vision of destruction that greeted the inhabitants of Salamanca at dawn. Although the choice of verse – whether a narrative and prosaic *romance* or, as in this case, an octave – indicates a desire to mould the literary spirit of the *relación*, modelling it on rhetorical sources and structures of a different

Farfán, *Templo panegírico, al certamen poético, que celebró la Hermandad insigne del Smo. Sacramento, estrenando la grande fábrica del Sagrario nuevo de la Metrópoli sevillana, con las fiestas en obsequio del Breve concedido por la Santidad de N. Padre Alejandro VII al primer instante de María Santísima Nuestra Señora sin pecado original, que ofrece por Bernabé de Escalante, en nombre de la insigne Hermandad, al Ilustrísimo, y Reverendísimo señor Dean y Cabildo de la S. Iglesia Cathedral, y Patriarchal, D. Fernando de la Torre Farfán*, Seville, Juan Gómez de Blas, 1663.

19. Duarte Núñez de Acosta, *Llanto de Menardo en la orilla del Tormes, el martes por la mañana, después de la destrucción desta ciudad de Salamanca con la creciente del río a 26 de enero de 1626*, Salamanca, Diego Cussio, 1626 [Salamanca, Biblioteca de la Universidad de Salamanca: BG/36558-2], henceforth *Llanto P*.

20. Duarte Núñez de Acosta, *Llanto de Menardo. En las orillas del Tormes al martes por la mañana después de la fatal destrucción de la ciudad de Salamanca con la creciente del río, que sucedió el día lunes 26 de enero de 1626* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Manuscrito 3891, ff. 141-160, *Museo en que se describen diferentes poemas que compuso el Doctor Don Duarte Núñez de Acosta, Medico de la familia de su A. Señor Don Juan de Austria... Púsolo en esta orden el Doctor Don Diego Tenorio de León*), henceforth *Llanto M*.

21. In the frontispiece and in the paratextual pages, it is in fact described as a *relación* composed “en octavas rimas”.

kind, from the very title the *Llanto* promises a mixed and decidedly interesting genre identity.

The title refers briefly to the story of the young shepherd Menardo and the despair of his lament on the bank of the Tormes in the wake of the catastrophe. It appears, thus, to echo the lachrymose tone of many of the short titles of the *relaciones* on tragic subjects, and in particular those dealing with natural disasters, almost always characterised by the announcement of a “lastimoso”, “lamentable”, or “trágico” event. Nevertheless, Duarte’s composition is not limited to the perspective of one of the many narrator witnesses stricken by having – and wanting – to tell the story of such agonising events. The narrative voice of the poet in the first octaves is, as we shall see, accompanied by the desperate monologue of Menardo who becomes the narrator and hero of the tale, or rather of a violent invective against the river, guilty of the catastrophe and responsible for the grief of the citizens and that of the young *zagal*:

IX

Quiere soltar la voz ya balbuciente,
rompiendo el llanto, y no invocando Musa,
ni Melpómene trágica, ni fuente,
que con sus ojos la del monte escusa,
ni la zampoña, ni el rabil consiente.
Un silbo ronco y tosco entonces usa,
para formar acuestas mal formadas
voces en lengua, en labios titubeadas.²²

Menardo’s entrance on the scene clearly shows how Duarte’s text modulates codices borrowed from other literary genres and other poetic traditions. In the octave above, the canonical *topos modestiae* confesses the unreliability of the shepherd’s voice, due both to his inexperience and to the difficulty of mastering such overwhelming emotion. However, it also refers to a particular version of another conventional trope of coeval verse, namely the relation between feelings and poetry, between soul and representation. While the shepherds of bucolic literature question the potential of poetry to supply a sentimental language equal to their grief, Menardo has no need of either Muses or sources of inspiration since his lament will not become a song or a *queja dulce* but a hoarse and rough whistle.

22. *Llanto* P, f. 5r, ll. 161-168. Quotations are from the printed exemplar, except for the last twenty-two octaves, where reference is made to the manuscript.

The dialectic play on some of the recurrent motifs of pastoral poetry is clear. A few octaves further on, the shepherd's invective against the Tormes blatantly calls up another *topos* of the bucolic tradition:

XXV

No juzgues poco lo que anoche hiciste,
 en la que honras pequeño, y grande infamas
 la que adornaste alegre, y besas triste,
 juzgaste pabellón, y orilla llamas.
 A cuyos hijos por sepulcro diste
 las mismas olas que ofreciste camas,
 cuando al calor brindaba tu frescura
 entonces lecho, ahora sepultura.²³

Menardo accuses the river of having betrayed Salamanca, where it is no longer venerated but vilified. While in the past it adorned the city with its waters – “adornaste alegre” – offering the citizens a delightful site of cool repose, now instead it laps the city miserably, kissing it to death, woefully, transforming itself into a place of quite different repose, a macabre deathbed: “entonces lecho, ahora sepultura”.

Duarte uses and cleverly combines two of the key motifs of the catastrophe narration. The first is the contrast between ordinary time and the time of the calamity: the sudden and irreversible change between the before and after of the disaster. This is clearly expressed through the opposition between the past tense used for the past – “adornaste”, “juzgaste”, “ofreciste” – and the present tense of the catastrophe – “besas”, “llamas”. The second is the transformation of the *locus amoenus* into a *locus infernalis*, traditionally rendered through the description of the revolt of the natural elements: in this case, the waters of the river. While both motifs refer to a core narrative of the catastrophe accounts – the complete distortion of normal life caused by the sudden arrival of the calamity – in the *Llanto* they are associated with an ancient *topos* of pastoral life: the connection between the shepherd's sentiments and the natural elements. The overwhelming metamorphosis of the riverbanks evidently corresponds to the shepherd's frame of mind. The Tormes, no longer the welcoming scenario of loving sighs and moans, is, on the contrary, the principal culprit for the grief of Menardo and all the citizens of Salamanca.²⁴

23. *Llanto* P, f. 6r, ll. 193-200.

24. Duarte's hybridising of his *relación en verso* is not restricted to the stylistic features and formulas of pastoral literature. The diversified cultural baggage of the young

4. “*Solo han de ser amparo tus favores*”

In the last twelve octaves of the poem Menardo’s grief is interrupted by a miraculous vision. Duarte is referring to a famous episode in the story of the flood recounted in several of the *relaciones*: the wondrous survival of a statue of the Virgin Mary carried unharmed on the baleful waters of the river:²⁵

Salamanca student complicates the reconstruction of influences and hypothetical sources. Nevertheless, it is not hard to read between the lines of the fierce apostrophe to the Tormes a trace of the ancient tradition of the lamentations over the fall of cities, memorably expressed in Psalm 137 and its enduring and heterogeneous reappearance in the literature of all times. On the genre of the lament for the fallen city, see Agostino Pertusi, *La caduta di Costantinopoli. Vol. I. Le testimonianze dei contemporanei*, Milan, Mondadori-Valla, 1976, and the more recent Jùlia Benavent i Benavent, María José Bertomeu Masià, “Relaciones sobre Turquía y Túnez en el Siglo XVI”, in *La invención de las noticias*, pp. 373-390. While Menardo’s invective against the river is a unique case in the tradition of orks on the Tormes and its floods, in works addressing the catastrophes caused by the Guadalquivir, popular *quejas* against the river are frequent. See Francisco de Borja Palomo, *Historia crítica de las riadas o grandes avenidas del Guadalquivir en Sevilla desde su Reconquista hasta nuestros días*, 2 vols, vol. I, Seville, Francisco Álvarez y compañía, 1878, pp. 86-87; Manuel Peña Díaz, “El río como amenaza”, in *Guadalquivir. Mapas y relatos de un río. Imagen y mirada*, ed. by José Peral López, Seville, Universidad de Sevilla, 2017, pp. 46-61: 51.

25. As anticipated by the woodcut and the dedication to the “Virgen Sacratísima concebida sin pecado” on the cover, the Marian element is of crucial importance in the text. The *Llanto* clearly illustrates the Immaculist fervour that spread through Spain – and the university world in particular – from the first decade of the 17th century. The bull of Pope Paul V *Sanctissimus Dominus Noster* (1617), banning any questioning of the Immaculate Conception doctrine, was enthusiastically welcomed by Philip III. Within the more general and complex reflection on racial purity, the Spanish Catholic political world found an exemplary identity cult in the conception without sin of the Virgin Mary. The Immaculist zeal shared by all the institutions of the monarchy led to the oath that was gradually established in the Spanish universities. In the Salamanca of Duarte’s time, the *claustró pleno* of 17 January 1618 definitively decreed the defence of the cult of the Immaculate by the University of Salamanca and the introduction of the oath for all the university institutions and for the graduates. To underscore the importance of the event, feast days were established, completed by the performance of the *La limpieza no manchada*, a work on the subject commissioned by the university from Lope de Vega. On the Marian cult in Spanish universities, see Juan Luis Bastero de Eleizalde, “La devoción mariana en las Universidades españolas”, *Scripta theologica: revista de la Facultad de Teología de la Universidad de Navarra*, 20/1 (1988), pp. 201-220. For the representation of the intercession of the Immaculate in the *relaciones de sucesos* and in iconography, see Pierre Civil, “Iconografía y relaciones en pliegos: la exaltación de la Inmaculada en la Sevilla de principios del siglo XVII”, in *Las relaciones de sucesos en España*, pp. 65-78; Françoise Crémoux, “El mediterráneo bajo la protección de la Virgen a través de algunos tipos de

LIII

Pero, suspenso con el grande estruendo
 que alborotaba a todos en la orilla,
 para sus voces, y sus pies moviendo,
 la piedra deja que sirvió de silla.
 Su vista por las olas esparciendo,
 con exceso y razón le maravilla
 ver que a la Virgen Madre en campo breve
 son andas de cristal rocas de nieve.²⁶

The young shepherd rises from the boulder on which he is sitting and from which he has launched his desperate lament against the Tormes – “la piedra deja que sirvió de silla” – and approaches the water so that he can see the statue being carried on the tide, borne up by two blocks of ice replacing the traditional pedestals: “ver que a la Virgen Madre en campo breve / son andas de cristal rocas de nieve”. The narration continues: the statue of the Virgin is carried out of the water, Menardo prostrates himself at its feet and launches into a prayer in which he begs for her intercession. The hesitant and sobbing voice of the young shepherd follows the canonical structure of the *supplicatio* of classical and biblical stamp.²⁷ The invocation of Our Lady is followed by a eulogy of her virtues and the final supplication imploring her intervention to assuage the disaster:

LX

Ave María, rociado velo,
 con el que sin ser hecho fue engendrado.
 Bella Judith, que libertaste al suelo

Relaciones de milagros en los siglos XVI y XVII”, in *España y el mundo mediterráneo a través de las Relaciones de Sucesos*, ed. by Pierre Civil, Françoise Crémoux and Jacobo Sanz Hermida, Salamanca, Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2008, pp. 113-130; María Elvira Mocholí Martínez, “El lugar de María Intercesora en las imágenes de la Escala de Salvación. Interpretación iconográfica de sus aspectos formales”, *Imago: revista de emblemática y cultura visual*, 4 (2012), pp. 7-22. For a more recent reflection on the cult of the Immaculate Conception, see David Martínez Vilches, “La Inmaculada Concepción en España. Un estado de la cuestión”, *Ilu. Revista de ciencias de las religiones*, 22 (2017), pp. 493-507.

26. *Llanto M*, f. 156, ll. 497-504.

27. On the tradition of the invocation and its classical and biblical models, see the memorable study on the prayer to the Virgin in Dante’s *Paradiso* by Erich Auerbach, “La preghiera di Dante alla Vergine (Par., XXXIII) ed antecedenti elogi”, *Studi su Dante*, Milan, BUR, 2005, pp. 273-308.

matando la lascivia del pecado.
 Escala de Jacob, que siempre al cielo
 obras subiste y premios has bajado.
 Hermosa zarza que en el mundo ciego
 es libre al vicio, como aquella al fuego.

LXI

Tú sola siempre nuestro amparo has sido,
 norte en la dicha, alivio de la pena,
 dichoso el Tormes, que nos ha ofrecido,
 en llena de aguas, de tus gracias llena.
 Para mostrarse al cielo condolido
 de tal desgracia, darnos gracia ordena,
 que para defender de sus rigores
 solo han de ser amparo tus favores.²⁸

Although it does not rely on the rhythm of a conventional anaphoric “tú”, which occurs only once, the eulogy is perfectly cadenced by a series of Marian attributes: the Virgin without sin; the brave Judith who delivered the world from evil; the ladder to heaven, essential to link the works of man to the grace of God; the redemptive burning bush that gives light to humanity and is never consumed. These are classic Marian epithets, but Duarte’s selection of them and the meaning they assume within the poem are clearly linked to the symbolic value he wishes to confer on the Virgin’s salvific action. Such attributes are widespread in a large and varied canon of texts, making it difficult to grasp their significance and shifting interpretation over time. Similarly, there are no clear traces of benchmark sources and texts in such a hybrid cultural background as that of Duarte. However, simply leafing through the *Abecedario virginal de excelencias del santísimo nombre de María* (1604) by Antonio Navarro illustrates how the poet draws on the exceptional canon of Marian virtues and represents them in the particular way that I wish to analyse here.

Navarro, a Trinitarian friar, gathered a total of 228 entries in this popular and encyclopaedic work devoted to the names of Our Lady. “Judith”, “ladder to heaven” and “burning bush” figure in it among the epithets referring respectively to female biblical figures interpreted as embodiments of Marian qualities, architectural elements or allegorical

28. *Llanto M*, ff. 158-159, ll. 472-488.

natural elements. Mary is associated with the name of Judith – “figurada en Iudich” – because she perfectly embodies the two-sided identity, being at once virtuous, pious and beautiful, like the “mujer muy abstinente y mortificada, y muy hermosa” and also courageous and strong, like she “que tuvo tanta fortaleza que cortó la cabeza al furioso capitán Holofernes”.²⁹ Just like the beautiful and virtuous Judith, who cut off the head of the Assyrian general, the Virgin Mary had cut the head off the dragon, symbol of the devil, thus freeing humanity from sin or, as Duarte puts it, “matando la lascivia del pecado”.³⁰

The reference to the Virgin as “escala de Jacob” refers to another conventional image from the Marian repertory: the ladder leading to heaven with angels ascending and descending that Jacob saw in a dream³¹ incisively renders Our Lady’s mediating function between heaven and earth, between God and man, “obras subiste y premios has bajado”. She through whom God became man continues to act as a channel, a gate or a ladder between the human and the divine. To quote Navarro: “la Virgen es puerta celestial, porque nos abrió el cielo, y escala del cielo, pues por ella descendió Dios a humanarse”.³² However, the pages of the *Abecedario* indicate that the representation of Mary as a ladder from heaven is also connected with her virginity: “estar el Señor en lo alto de la escalera, o puerta, que llamó Jacob, fue darnos a entender, cómo Jesús Cristo estuvo en sus entrañas humanado, y en su alma por gracia”.³³

The third Marian epithet mentioned by Duarte refers again to Our Lady’s mediating and salvific role: the “rubum quem viderat Moyses”, the ever-burning bush in which Moses saw God who promised the liberation of the Jews, is one of the numerous natural symbols that express the brilliance of the Virgin. As Navarro explains, the bush burning eternally without being consumed refers both to the virgin birth of Christ and to the liberation of humanity from sin. God speaks to Moses through the burning bush, revealing the salvation of the Jewish people, and speaks to

29. Antonio Navarro, *Abecedario virginal de excelencias del santísimo nombre de María donde se le dan a la Virgen doscientos y veintiocho nombres, según la Sagrada Escritura y propiedades naturales de piedras preciosa, aves, animales, fuentes, arboles, y otros secretos de Naturaleza*, Madrid, Juan de la Cuesta, 1604, p. 46v.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Genesis 28:10-22.

32. Navarro, *Abecedario virginal de excelencias*, pp. 108r-v.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 108v.

Mary through the fire of Christ, announcing the salvation of all humanity: “también la promesa que hizo Dios a Moisés, de la libertad del pueblo, figura la libertad del género humano de la esclavonia del demonio, que en la Virgen se vio, en cuanto por su consentimiento fue libre de semejante servidumbre”.³⁴ Therefore, in addition to the purity of the Virgin, the epithets Duarte chose focus particularly on Mary’s role as a mediator between heaven and earth and as a redemptive and heroic ally in the battle against evil.

The link between Menardo’s desperate plea to the Virgin and the connotations of the Marian epithets in Duarte’s aretalogy is perfectly expressed in the symmetrical structure of the first and last lines of the second octave cited above: “Tú sola siempre nuestro amparo has sido”, “solo han de ser amparo tus favores”. The Virgin’s role as protectress of man and his intermediary in heaven is encapsulated in the image of refuge: Our Lady, Judith, ladder of heaven and ever-burning bush, the sole source of human salvation, is now being invoked to defend the victims of the flood.

The illocution to the Virgin and the passage to the first-person plural augment the tragic intensity of the prayer. This takes the form of a communal *petitio*, yoking Menardo’s grief to that of the entire city of Salamanca, while it also counterbalances the bitter apostrophe aimed at the river in the preceding octaves. The Tormes – “vil”, “intrépido, sacrilego, nefando”, “traydor que la cara esconde cuando el golpe juega” – is set off against the Virgin, “gloria del cielo y del infierno afrenta”, “norte en la dicha, alivio de la pena”. The contrast between the woeful action of the river and the salvific action of Our Lady is rendered emblematically also by the central lines of the octave. While the “dichoso” Tormes has struck the city with a flood of water, the Virgin is requested to fill the waters with her grace; the river has caused tragedy such as to make heaven weep, whereas Mary must ensure that only grace may fall from the sky.

This conflictual relation between the Tormes and Our Lady, respectively between maligned and redemptive action, elucidates the nature of the salvific intervention of the Virgin. In both the introductory octaves and those occupied by Menardo’s invective, the flood and its devastating effects associate the waters of the Tormes with the attributes of Hell:

34. *Ibid.*, p. 207r.

VI

[...]

con ajeno caudal, fatal tesoro
 que la guadaña triste, o golpe ciego
 puso en el Tormes que, funesto y frío
 le juzgo infierno, si le aclamo río.³⁵

VII

[...]

cada cual de los muchos destrozados,
 la vida con la sangre al Tormes vierte,
 mudándole en alfombras carmesíes,
 y los que eran diamantes en rubíes.³⁶

XXIV

[...]

Estigias son las olas con que espantas
 trágicas furias, infernales fieras,
 que si el cielo con ellas castigara
 con lagrimas el cielo se ablandara.³⁷

The rebellion of the natural elements is a convention of disaster narrations, but here again Duarte offers his own particular interpretation. The waters of the Tormes are not only in flood or overflowing; the normally pleasant banks have not only become threatening and inhospitable. The crystalline stream of the river is transformed into bloody waves that assume the shape of hellish beasts, its diamonds are morphed into rubies, its bed into a purple carpet. If the Tormes has now become an infernal Stygian marsh, the intervention requested from the Virgin fits perfectly with the mediating and redemptive action alluded to in the selected epithets. Our Lady will placate the waters of the river by invoking the clemency of God, angered by human sins, sins of which the flooding and the infernal metamorphosis of the river are a direct consequence:

LXII

La ciudad triste, alegre ya con verte,
 Ninive pienso, si pensé Sodoma.

35. *Llanto P*, f. 2v, ll. 45-48.

36. *Ibid.*, f. 3r, ll. 53-56.

37. *Ibid.*, f. 5v, ll. 189-92.

Tendrán fin sus trabajos con tenerte
 si en sus diluvios eres la paloma.
 Teme el azote de aquel brazo fuerte
 que al alto Cherubín sujeta y doma,
 pero no tema ya su golpe fiero
 siendo tú el Ángel del minante acero.³⁸

This octave confirms the conciliatory and redemptive nature of the Virgin's previously invoked action. Duarte uses the references to Nineveh and Sodom and to God's anger to indicate the sinful conduct of the citizens of Salamanca as the true cause of the disaster. In the last verses, he turns again to the heroic and courageous qualities of Mary, a new Judith. If Salamanca, redeemed like Nineveh, returns to fearing God without dreading another tragic "golpe fiero", it will be thanks to the Virgin's strenuous and vigorous defence against the devil, against sin and against the licentiousness that triggered the catastrophe.

The *Llanto de Menardo* offers an original version of the *pastoral immaculista*³⁹ in which the intervention of the Virgin is not constructed merely through the shepherd's tragic invocation. The focus on the statue and the miraculous manner in which it was saved can be read as the elaboration of an element peculiar to Holy Scripture: a particular relationship between sacred objects and divinities. Patrick Bégrand has shown how, in the *relaciones de milagros*, the narration of prodigious events related to relics or statues always sets up a correspondence between the saint's salvific action and the sacred object. The statue of the Virgin Mary spared by the violent flooding of the river has all the features of what Bégrand calls the "objet modal" of the miraculous action. In other words, an object that mediates between the "sujet-patient" – Salamanca and its young *zagal* – and "l'intercesseur qu'il métonymise",⁴⁰ that is, the invoked intercessor, the Virgin "metonymised" in the statue. Therefore, it is not merely a conventional correspondence between the deity and the effigy, or simply the process of presentification through

38. *Llanto M*, f. 159, ll. 493-96.

39. A genre that was established through works of the greatest importance, such as *Pastores de Belén* (1612) by Lope de Vega, and that was also taken up in American Creole literature. See the very interesting edition of Francisco Bramón, *Los sirgueros de la Virgen sin original pecado*, ed. by Trinidad Barrera, Madrid-Frankfurt, Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2015.

40. See Patrick Bégrand, *Signes et Châtiments, Monstres et Merveilles. Stratégies discursives dans les "relaciones de milagros" publiées en Espagne au XVII^e siècle*, Besançon, Presses Universitaires FrancComtoises, 2004, pp. 125-130.

images and statues proper to Catholic iconography, but rather a process of mediation of the object that in some way represents and presentifies the sacred entity and the miraculous actions of the same.

In the octaves of the *Llanto*, the metonymic relation between the statue and the action of the Virgin is perfectly rendered through a series of ekphrastic images which, in their precise description of the statue, refer to other recurrent epithets linked to Marian representation:

LIV

Venía sobre el agua levantada
a ser Santelmo desta vil tormenta,
la bella nave de salud cargada,
gloria del cielo y del infierno afrenta.
La que en la esfera de astros tachonada
su planta estampa, ya su planta asienta
en orbes que son aguas, nieves, astros,
espuma aljófara, olas alabastros.⁴¹

In the metaphors of the salvific ark and St Elmo's fire, Duarte condenses the analogy between the prodigious arrival of the statue on the raging waters of the river and the miraculous intervention of the Virgin. Like the statue, Our Lady will prevail over the river and become a sure benchmark for the Salamanca community. A few octaves later, the poet develops the same concept through an image of a distinctly cultist quality:

LV

A sus sagrados pies el Tormes viejo
es cristalina, y lucida columna,
que para ser feliz fue buen consejo
ser a la Madre altar, al hijo cuna.
Ya de Luna sirvió la de su espejo,
y no se eclipsará jamás su Luna,
pues la de Juan en el Apocalipse
por estar a sus pies no teme eclipse.⁴²

The description of the Virgin Mary with the waters of the Tormes at her feet – the river as the altar of the Mother, the cradle of the Son, the mirror that reflects her effigy – refers to the famous image in chapter

41. *Llanto* M, f. 157, ll. 425-432.

42. *Ibid.*, ll. 433-440.

twelve of the Apocalypse of Saint John of the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. Exploiting the polysemy of the Spanish word “luna” – used with the meaning of “Moon” and “mirror” – the octave parallels the river and the moon, both under the seraphic control of the Virgin. Since the moon is widely used as a symbol of earthly things, the poet’s description of the statue also expresses the motif of the Virgin as mediator between human and divine, between heaven and earth, “por estar a sus pies no teme eclipse”. Just as the moon beneath the feet of the woman clothed with the sun will never be eclipsed, just as the Virgin will continue to intercede for the destiny of earthly things, so too can she prevail over the river and calm its raging waters.

Both Menardo’s prayer and the particular symbolic power assumed by the statue of the Virgin highlight the evident interpretation of the natural disaster as a divine punishment called down by the sinful conduct of the citizens. This is a very common perspective in the Manichean imaginary of the *pliegos noticieros*, especially those dealing with extraordinary events. Duarte identifies with precisely that religious isotopy which – between the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th – was beginning to make way for a more complex reflection on the causes of catastrophes of natural origin. In a period of friction between science and faith, of the reconfiguration of orthodoxies and canons, the theodicies of calamitous times did not simply question the good and just nature of God, the struggle against the forces of evil and God’s punitive or providential retribution, but it also began to reason about the relationship of heaven to the order of nature.⁴³ If God is in all things, and if nature is based on a causal order willed by God, any action beyond such order has to be unnatural, supernatural and inexplicable. If God – or the forces of evil fighting against God – have caused or permitted this disaster, then God alone can restore things to normal.

Following the approach of the numerous narrations on the *riada de San Policarpo*, in the *Llanto de Menardo*, too, the only hope for the victims of the flood is divine intervention. The Tormes has been eliminated as tutelary deity of the city of Salamanca; it has become a traitor, possibly urged on

43. On the theodicy of early modern culture and its relations with natural catastrophes, see Lotte Kemkens, *On the Connections between Religion and Disaster: A Literature Review*, CRCS, Yogyakarta, Gadjah Mada University of Indonesia, 2013.

by the forces of evil and the sinful conduct of the citizens. Therefore, the Virgin and her intercession with God are the only hope of salvation, the only *amparo*. Certain of obtaining her help, and not fearing the comments even of those who criticise his work, the shepherd brings both his weeping and the narration to an end:

LXIV

A tus plantas me ofrezco mal vestido
 con mi rustica piel, y tosca abarca,
 que cuando de aguas el diluvio ha sido
 ¿dónde amparo tendré mejor que el arca?
 Ya no temo las fauces del olvido,
 ni dura muerte, ni funesta parca,
 pues confiado en ti con celo santo
 doy gloria a tu Deidad, fin a mi llanto.⁴⁴

5. Conclusion

Duarte's poem provides an original representation of the disaster that draws on forms and *topoi* of other literary traditions. It exemplifies how the informative genres of the time offer significant evidence of the culture of the Golden Age and the permeability of its literary canons. As we have seen, in the *Llanto* the purely informative element characteristic of the *relaciones de sucesos* is associated with the recurrent motifs of a pastoral *a lo divino*, in a singular expression of the structural elements composing the account of the catastrophe. The reactions of the communities struck by earthquakes, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions are emblematically represented by an ancestral pastoral lament that nevertheless follows the manner and stylistic features of the *literatura noticiera*. Echoing the voices of the people reported by the numerous eyewitness narrators of this same catastrophic flood of the Tormes, Menardo bewails the destruction of his city, mourns for the past, stressing the sudden upheaval of everyday life, and begs the heavens for mercy by invoking the Virgin Mary. In the same way, Duarte is evidently sensitive to another of the key issues of the representation of calamitous times in the early modern era: namely, the causes of the disaster. However, the providential perspective of the *Llanto*

44. *Llanto* M, f. 160, ll. 505-512.

leaves no space for Aristotelian deductions or pre-scientific reasonings: Duarte literally interprets a theodicy that still sees a vindictive God as the cause of all the good and evil in the world. While in the disaster narrations the accounts of the contributions to deliverance made by the various agents play a fundamental role, in the *Llanto de Menardo* these are embodied in the mediating and salvific action of the Virgin metonymised by the miraculous appearance of the statue on the raging waters of the Tormes.

The complexity of Our Lady's action, portrayed through a varied range of Marian qualities and attributes, also brings forth the way in which the actantial structure of the account is closely linked to the different interpretations of the causes of the catastrophe. Duarte's providential interpretation – in which human action is seen only in terms of sin and redemption – does not question the responsibility of institutions or contemplate heroic gestures on their part. If the cause of the flood is identified in God's will to punish, there is no figure of aid more appropriate than the Virgin Mary, the eternal mediator between heaven and earth and the sole *amparo* in times of calamity.

ANTONIO PERRONE

The Hero *Topos* in Southern Italian Lyric Poetry on Catastrophes*

1. *Lyric poetry on disasters*

This article stems from a dissertation addressing lyric poetry on disasters in the Spanish Viceroyalty of Naples. It explores the special status of a type of poetry that features a striking discord between the actual occasion of the composition and the repertory of cultural imagery. Poetry dealing with catastrophes is a fairly atypical category, as it deals with events that are not normally the stuff of lyric. The events in question are the numerous disasters that struck southern Italy in the course of the 17th century and that transformed Naples into what has been called “a city of catastrophes”.¹ This included the eruption of Vesuvius in 1631, the Masaniello revolt of 1647, the plague epidemic of 1656 and a second eruption of Vesuvius in 1660.

The production of this kind of poetry was nevertheless conspicuous, amounting to a body of over 200 works dated from between the first eruption of Vesuvius up to the Samnium earthquake of 1688, hence covering the span of the literary Baroque.² A considerable portion of these texts are celebratory poems portraying saints, military leaders and viceroys

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1. An expression borrowed from Giancarlo Alfano, “La città delle catastrofi”, in *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, ed. by Sergio Luzzatto and Gabriele Pedullà, 3 vols, vol. II, Turin, Einaudi, 2012, pp. 317-325.

2. The data are taken from the author’s doctoral research (*Topiche del disastro nella lirica meridionale del Seicento*), the results of which will be published in July 2023. For

engaged in resolving the catastrophe of either a divine or social nature. Of the 70 works collected, here I analyse two sonnets by Antonio de' Rossi, two by Biagio Cusano and an ode by Giacomo Lubrano, highlighting the distinctly conventional character of catastrophe narration and its mediatic function in 17th-century southern Italian culture.

2. *Revolution and natural catastrophes*

I have decided to consider the poems in chronological order, to illustrate both the long duration of the catastrophe *topos* and the way it relates to the practice of manipulating information implemented by the Jesuits and the potentates of the Spanish Crown.

The analysis begins with the two sonnets by the Jesuit poet Antonio de' Rossi, taken from the *Poesie*, printed in Naples by the publisher Mollo in 1661. The first is dedicated to Tommaso Aniello di Amalfi (Masaniello), the fisherman who led the popular revolts of 1647-1648. The second celebrates the action during the revolt of Íñigo Vélez de Guevara, eighth Count of Oñate and Viceroy of Naples.³ Clearly, these examples are concerned not with a natural catastrophe, but with a disaster of a social nature. Nevertheless, they still fall fully within the literary category of “disaster culture”, in which the various tragic events that struck the Kingdom of Naples are considered to be connected. Masaniello's revolt is in fact described using the lexicon and imagery of a catastrophe, while also being portrayed in comparison with the eruption of Vesuvius or the plague epidemic. As I will show, this interpretation of the political event was primarily influenced by the religious mindset of 17th-century society.

the chronology of the Italian literary Baroque, see Franco Croce, *Tre momenti del Barocco letterario in Italia*, Florence, Sansoni, 1966.

3. This brief historical contextualisation draws on Giuseppe Galasso, *Napoli spagnola dopo Masaniello: politica, cultura, società*, Florence, Sansoni, 1972. The Masaniello revolt was a popular insurrection against the power of the viceroy, triggered by the increased taxes on food. It coincided with a parallel rising against Spanish power in Sicily, fomented by Giuseppe d'Alesi, and lasted from 7 to 16 July 1647, when Masaniello was assassinated. The repercussions of the revolt persisted up to 1648, with the constitution of the first Neapolitan Republic, which was deposed through the joint siege of Don Juan José de Austria (*austriaco semideo*) and the Count of Oñate Íñigo Vélez de Guevara (*gran Guevara*), viceroy of the Kingdom of Naples from 1648 to 1653.

A source contemporary to these events can help provide a framework for this type of reasoning. Niccolò Pasquale, nephew of the historian Giovanni Pietro Pasquale, wrote in his *Racconto a' posteri della peste di Napoli, e suo Regno Nell'anno 1656 dalla redenzione del mondo*, that:

Quando nell'Anno millesimo secentesimo trigesimo primo [...] avvenne quella celebre eruttion del Vesuuio, la di lui Divina Potenza dei Mali [...] ne diè qualche presaggio, [...] denunciò l'ira Divina; e fece di veder, come in cifra, nell'aborto del suo seno, il parto calamitoso d'un secolo intiero: nelle scosse i moti della terra, e le soversioni delle Provincie: nelle viscere d'acciaio insieme, e nel fuoco vomitato, il ferro, e le fiamme delle Rivolutioni Popolari del 1647 [...] ne' tiepidi, e roventi fiumi sgorgati, i fumanti rivi di sangue; nell'aperte fauci, la fame: nella mefite, la pestilenza [...] nelle ceneri il funerale.⁴

As Giancarlo Alfano observed in an essay-anthology dealing with catastrophe poetry, in the popular imagination the catastrophes were closely connected and, if one is to believe Pasquale, the plague was considered to be the punishment for the popular revolts. Alfano points out that Pasquale encapsulated the history of the entire century in the dates 1631, 1647 and 1656, with the calamitous birth of the century being the chaos of the eruption, its continuation the hell of the revolt and its end the drop of pestiferous poison.⁵ In short, as a product of Vesuvius, the revolt takes on the symbolic value of an authentic calamity, a traumatic event that upset the equilibrium of the normal world. It is set on a par with the disastrous events that followed the eruption and that were connected with it in an apocalyptic vision.

3. *Heroes and anti-heroes*

This so to speak “unitary” vision of the southern Italian catastrophes – a characteristic of 17th-century man – also affected the lyric poetry produced between the eruption of 1631 and the plague of 1656. As Alfano has noted, these compositions are marked by a conservative ideology, structured against a recurrent mythological background with a standardised thematic repertory, and they appear to be closely interrelated. To illustrate this aspect

4. Niccolò Pasquale, *A' posteri della peste di Napoli, e suo Regno Nell'anno 1656 dalla redenzione del mondo. Racconto*, Naples, di Fusco, 1668.

5. See Giancarlo Alfano, Marcello Barbato, Andrea Mazzucchi, *Tre catastrofi. Eruzione, rivolta e peste nelle poesie del Seicento napoletano*, Naples, Cronopio, 2000.

of the poems through the selected heroic figures, let us now take a look at the first two sonnets, by Antonio de' Rossi.

- Marin guerriero, anzi a i squamosi armenti
 Guerra eccitò co' i canapi ritorti:
 Or di Marte, costui, rende i men forti,
 In riva al bel Tirren, seguaci ardenti.
- Corron costor, quasi in ebbrezza absorti, 5
 Di faci armati, a divorar gli argenti:
 Resi d'altro furor sciolti torrenti,
 Fan per tutto inondar ruine, e morti.
- In se stesso sconvolta, è in sè divisa
 Partenope, non più festosa, e vaga, 10
 Or tutta è duol, nel proprio sangue intrisa.
- E di più fieri scempi omai presaga,
 Su meste arene, in bruna spoglia, assisa,
 Al suo grembo gentil di pianto allaga.⁶
- Voi, del vago Tirren cigni canori,
 cui l'alme a traer dal ruginoso oblio
 infiamma i bei pensier nobil desio,
 gli eroi fregiando d'immortali allori,
- del gran Guevara ad eternar gli onori, 5
 furor v'accenda del castalio dio:
 gloria più rara il dolce stil natio
 trarrà di lui i bellici fulgori.
- Ché s'al cigno di Manto il pio Troiano
 e di Smirna al cantor valse Pelide 10
 recar ne' pregi suoi vanto sovrano,
- che fia per questi, a cui maggior non vide
 la prisca età? Questi ch'al cielo ispano
 sorse novel, ma più sagace Alcide?⁷

6. Antonio de' Rossi, "Si invitano i poeti napoletani alle lodi del signore di Oñate per le cose da lui operate a favore della Corona di Spagna nelle rivoluzioni del Regno nel 1647 e 1648", in *Sonetti* [1661], ed. by Luigi Montella, Salerno, Edisud, 2012, p. 108.

7. Antonio de' Rossi, "Sonetto 9", in *Sonetti*, p. 113.

Both sonnets are structured on an epic imaginary, as is apparent from even a quick reading of the quatrains. The first is a portrait that stresses the origins of the revolutionary: he is a *marin guerriero*, namely a warrior come from the sea, even though the moral judgement that identifies him as a “monster” is not immediately apparent.⁸ The backdrop to the action of the *guerriero* is a weeping *Partenope*, hence a siren, who, like him, has marine origins “intrisa... nel proprio sangue” (l. 11). The revolt in effect acts like a river “a inondar ruine, e morti”, with Masaniello’s followers devastating the city in the guise of “sciolti torrenti” of “furore” (ll. 7-8). It is interesting to note how the image of the river and that of the rebels who “corron [...] a divorar gli argenti / resi d’altro furor sciolti torrenti” (ll. 6-7), echo the lexicon used for the eruption of 1631. The flames of Vesuvius are described as “divoratrici”, and the most frequent syntagms of its fire are: “disciolto in fumi, Correr [...] di torrenti, e fiumi, Di fiamme innalzando ampi torrenti, Gran fiume ardente, Fiumi di foco, rio bogliente”, and so on.⁹

This overlapping of models of catastrophic representation is frequent in the disaster imagery and is due to the marked interdiscursivity of southern Italian Baroque poetry.¹⁰ It is found not only in the works of the Neapolitan poets but also in the poems portraying the events of the Sicilian revolutions of 1647 and 1674, where we can read of “Sicani Tifei” (Biagio Guaragna Galluppo), of the “avvampare d’arme civili” (Carlo Buragna) and so on. These works refer to the lexicon of the eruption and also to the mythological background of the volcanic activity.¹¹

8. As explained by Silvana D’Alessio, *Contagi, La rivolta napoletana del 1647-’48: linguaggio e potere politico*, Florence, CET, 2003, p. 6, and as is clearly visible in the proposed sequence of poems, the “monstrous” images of the catastrophic narration serve to trigger a visual and emotional shock in the reader or listener, thus ideologically steering the perception of the disaster. In short, they have the same function as modern mass media.

9. In addition to the poems analysed here, see Francesco Antonio Tomasi, “Correr di fiamme qui torrenti, e fiumi”, in *Il Vesuvio fiammeggiante, Poema del Sincero Accademico Insensato*, Naples, Roncagliolo, 1632, p. 4: “Correr di fiamme qui torrenti, e fiumi, / E fumi e fiamme esser in un congiunti, / Cader lo liquido foco in giù da i monti [...]”.

10. I refer to the category of interdiscursivity as it appears in Cesare Segre, “Intertestuale/interdiscorsivo. Appunti per una fenomenologia delle fonti”, in *La parola ritrovata. Fonti e analisi letteraria*, ed. by Costanzo Di Girolamo and Ivano Paccagnella, Palermo, Sellerio, 1982, pp. 15-28. It signifies a reutilisation of images shared by all Baroque cultural production. The term is also useful for indicating the creation of a species of pre-established lexicon for catastrophic narration, as emerges in the subsequent examples.

11. Biagio Guaragna Galluppo, “Per la rivoluzione di Messina”, in *Poesie*, Naples, Paci, 1679, pp. 111-15; Carlo Buragna, “Per la venuta del Signor Don Giovanni d’Austria



Fig. 1. Andrea Alciato, *Duodecim certamina Herculis, Emblemata*, Paris, Wechel, 1534.

Shifting the focus to the heroic figure who intervenes to halt the disaster, the other sonnet offers a portrait of the victor, the *gran Guevara*. Here, the condottiere who restored the order disrupted by the revolt is portrayed in the guise of the mythological hero, represented by *Alcide* or Heracles, the demi-god who in the Greek tradition has the function of a civilising hero. The allegory with classical mythology is placed at the end of the sonnet to emphasise its function as an image *in absentia*. Effectively, it operates as an emblem, a visual *topos*, which, based on the repeated syntagms like *sagace Alcide*, *semideo*, *semideo garzon*, *Giove ispano* etc. – as frequent as those previously mentioned – make it possible to mentally represent the figure: in a word, to materialise it (Fig. 1).¹²

in Italia, in tempo de' tumulti di Messina", in *Poesie* [1683], ed. by Luigi Matt, Cagliari, CUEC, 2012, pp. 12-17.

12. See Antonio Muscettola, "I tumulti di Napoli, sedati da don Giovanni d'Austria. Al signor Francesco Dentice", in *Rime* [1659], ed. by Luigi Montella, Alessandria, Ed. Dell'Orso, 2002, pp. 190-193; Giuseppe Battista, "Priega all'altezza del signor Don Giovanni d'Austria felicissima venuta in Napoli per acquetar i tumulti", in *Elogi di capitani illustri*, ed. by Lorenzo Crasso, Venice, Combi, 1683, p. 17; Francesco Capone, "Si loda la Prudenza dell'Eccellentissimo Signor Conte Dognatte Innico Guevara Viceré nel Regno di Napoli, con l'occasione delle popolari rivoluzioni. Al Signor Cavalier Fra Gio: Battista Theodoro", in *Poesie liriche*, Naples, Cicconio, 1663, pp. 197-206.

This mnemonic mechanism is effective because the emblems inserted in the texts are part of the collective imaginary of Baroque man, and are hence already codified in the mind of the reader. These images were to be found in books such as the *Emblemata* by Andrea Alciati, which was printed in Italy in 1621 and went on to be produced in numerous editions up to 1661.¹³ Consequently, these figures were familiar to almost everyone in the literary milieu in a culture that we know to have been predominantly visual, that communicated, conserved and handed on its historic heritage through images.¹⁴ In a 2016 study on political emblems, Fabrizio Bondi explained how the emblems and *loci communes* create a subtle play of references and parallels between literary sources and were conceived to leave an imprint on the memory. As illustrated below, the poets under discussion often leveraged such images to manipulate the interpretation of the narrated events.¹⁵

Returning to the sonnet on the viceroy, it is interesting that the emblem of Heracles is not the only one. Employing the rhetorical device of *enargeia* that makes it possible to “ponere res ante oculos”¹⁶ – that is, to visualise it – the poet inserts a second image. As we read in the opening lines, the “cigni canori”, namely, the Neapolitan poets, are all called to “traer dal ruginoso oblio” the memory of the ancient heroes and to adorn them with “immortali allori” (ll. 2, 4). Their poetry will thus draw forth the “bellici fulgori” of the Spanish condottiere (l. 8), who is metaphorically compared first with “il pio Troiano” and then with *Pelide* – respectively, Aeneas and Achilles – the former through “il cigno di Manto”, Virgil, and the latter through that of *Smirna*, Homer (ll. 9-10). The image of the “dux clemens”, the virtuous condottiere, is thus delineated, symbolised by a crown of laurel and two crossed swords set in the centre of the sky (Fig. 2). The swords are not mentioned in the poem but are evoked by the presence of the two mythical warriors and visualised through the lexicon of war: the adjectives *ruginoso* and *bellico*, the *fulgori*, the *gloria* and the *vanto sovrano*.

13. Gabriele De Mino, *Il libro degli emblemi di Andrea Alciati. Secondo le edizioni del 1531 e del 1534*, Milan, Adelphi, 2015.

14. See José Maravall, *La cultura del Barroco, Análisis de una estructura histórica*, Barcelona, Ariel, 1975.

15. Fabrizio Bondi, *Il principe per emblemi. Letteratura e immagini del politico tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2016, pp. 3-4. See also Mario Praz, *Studi sul concettismo*, Florence, Sansoni, 1946.

16. Quintiliano, *Institutio oratoria* [I d.C.], ed. by Cesare Marco Calcante, Milan, BUR, 1997, p. 187.



Fig. 2. Brück Angermundt, *Emblemata politica*, Cologne, Heyden, 1618.

The two emblems show how mythological figures are used in celebratory poetry primarily to claim a possible retaliation against disaster. In other words, they have a political function, raising historical figures to the rank of the superhuman so that they can restrain what is beyond the power of man. As a result, such emblems can ideally compensate for the powerlessness of the viceroys and the commanders, who are actually helpless before the propagation of the disasters: in this way, they are ennobled and endowed with the trappings of supermen. As Nino Leone argued in 1994, St Gennaro responds to the same function, becoming the champion of a helpless populace that from then on would see the future only as inevitable fate. They had no choice but to trust in a supernatural defence and were desperate to pit an omnipresent force against the feeble power of the viceroy. They simply had to believe that there was some form of power that could oppose the oppressive yoke of nature.¹⁷

17. Nino Leone, *La vita quotidiana a Napoli ai tempi di Masaniello*, Milan, BUR, 1994, p. 245.

4. *Saints and catastrophes*

Moving on to the poems about natural disasters,¹⁸ it should be noted that in the disaster poetry the second figure to be analysed, St Gennaro, is also frequently portrayed removed from his religious context. He is instead set within a classical literary tradition in which, like the military commanders of the previous texts, he is compared with the heroes of Greek-Roman mythology. First, we should recall that Gennaro is also the protector against revolutions since, as can be seen in many poems, the popular revolts are connected with the eruption of Vesuvius, so that it seems appropriate to speak of a “politicised sanctity”.¹⁹ Secondly, the characteristic action linking him to the eruption is the arrest of a catastrophe, so that he is

18. The following sections analyse poems dealing with the 1631 eruption of Vesuvius and the Naples plague of 1656. To provide a brief historical context to these two events: Vesuvius erupted on 16 December 1631, with warning signs in the form of earthquakes and deformations of the earth that took place around 10 December. The eruption continued up to 1 January of the following year, with further earthquakes being felt up to March, as reported in many printed *relazioni* and *avvisi* (for instance, Vincenzo Bove, *Nuove osservazioni fatte sopra gli effetti dell'incendio del Monte Vesuvio, Dal 16 di Decembre 1631 fino ai 16 di Gennaio 1632, Aggiunte alla decima relazione, relazione Di nuovo rivisita e ristampata per Vincenzo Bove*, Naples, Scoriggio, 1632). The plague epidemic spread through the viceroyalty in 1656. Moreover, since the eruption of 1631 had led large numbers of people to move from the countryside to the urban areas, the disease proved extremely lethal for the capital, causing around 200,000 deaths in a population which, in that year, numbered 450,000 inhabitants (data from Eduardo Nappi, *Aspetti della società e dell'economia napoletana durante la peste del 1656*, Naples, Archivio Storico del Banco di Napoli, 1980).

19. See, at least, Tommaso Gaudiosi, “A San Gennaro protettore nelle rivoluzioni di Napoli”, *L'arpa poetica* [1671], ed. by Luigi Montella, Salerno, Edisud, 2012, p. 131: “Fosti, o Napoli mia, sede e ritengo / d'alto valore e di beltà celeste; / invidiò le tue delizie oneste / di Cipro antica il favoloso regno. // Or, data in preda al popolar disdegno, / spieghi insegne terribili e funeste: / di tronchi busti e di recise teste / t'innalza Morte un immortale disegno. // De le Sirene e de le Muse il canto / scusa il fragor del concavo metallo, / de l'orbe madri e de le spose il pianto. // Pastor celeste, e tu, col sangue santo / che per noi ferve in limpido cristallo, / non estingui una volta incendio tanto?” Non-poetic evidence of the association is also in Scipione Mazzella, *Descrizione del Regno di Napoli*, Naples, Cappello, 1647. The concept of “politicised sanctity” is borrowed from Antonio Rubial García, “La santidad politizada. La utilización de un santoral insólito en la construcción de las identidades del clero regular novohispano en el siglo XVIII”, in *A la luz de Roma, Santos y santidad en el barroco iberoamericano*, ed. by Fernando Quiles García, José Jaime García Bernal, Paolo Broggio and Marcello Fagiolo Dell'Arco, 3 vols, vol. I, Seville-Rome, Universidad Pablo de Olavide-Roma Tre-Press, 2020, pp. 17-42.

compared not only to classical heroes but also to biblical figures, as we can see in the sonnet by the religious poet Biagio Cusano.

Gli stupor che cantò Grecia sovente
del favoloso già fonte d'Epiro,
o con qual gloria or qui veraci ammiro
del sangue di Gennaro al rio bogliente!

L'accese orride fiamme ecco qui spente, 5
che dal Vesevo, anzi da l'Orco uscìro.
E 'l foco amante de l'empireo giro
s'accende, ov'era estinto, in petto algente.

Sangue, che chiuso in vetro cavo io scerno,
qual Pelican n'avviva e tragge al soglio 10
ch'ha sul ciel di cristallo il Re superno.

Per affondar, per rintuzzar l'orgoglio
del tenebroso faraon d'Averno
poco sangue è Mar Rosso, un vetro è scoglio.²⁰

Here, using *enargeia* and following a principle of metonymic expansion whereby the fire, being red, can share the same attributes as blood, or as the sea mixed with the lava of Vesuvius, the poet transforms Gennaro into the prototype of the condottiere-saviour represented by the figure of Moses. This transfiguration takes place through the backdrop of the *Mar Rosso*, in which the ampoule acts as a *scoglio* and where the pharaoh is consequently identified in the *Re d'Averno*, Hades (ll. 13-14), in the mingling of classical and sacred sources typical of Baroque poetry. Indeed, the sonnet opens on an epic note, “Gli stupor che cantò Grecia sovente” (l. 1) – even though the end refers to an episode from the Old Testament – making a comparison between the ampoule of St Gennaro’s blood and the famous rivers of *Epiro* (l. 2). Famed among the rivers of Epirus, the mythological Acheron was the river that divided the world of the living from that of the dead.²¹

20. Biagio Cusano, “Le reliquie del glorioso martire San Gennaro riparano Napoli del fuoco del Vesuvio”, *Poesie Sacre*, Naples, Passaro, 1672, p. 159.

21. It should be remembered that in 1660, as recorded in numerous printed *avvisi*, treatises and *relazioni* of the time, there was a fire on Monte Somma, namely, another eruption of Vesuvius. It is therefore likely, at a historical level, that the eruptive theme may have been boosted by this event. See Alessandro Crescenzi, *Giornale dell'incendio dell'Vessuvio dell'anno MDCLX con le osseruationi matematiche. Al molto illustre e molte eccell. Sig. mio padrone osservandissimo il Sig. D. Giuseppe Carpano, dottore*

Before continuing, it is important to note two aspects. First, the lengthy persistence of the disaster *topos*, and in particular the frequent appearance of the eruption of Vesuvius, which continued to function even as far down the line as 1672, featuring the same conventional mythical backdrop. The second aspect relates to how this backdrop is created. As explained by Françoise Lavocat in *Écritures du désastre* and Giancarlo Alfano in the anthology *Tre catastrofi*,²² the use of legendary figures – either religious or mythological – serves to mould the representation of the disaster. Since these disasters were traumatic events that upset the social and individual equilibrium of the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Naples, what this means in psychological terms is that the myth makes it possible to heal the rift between the outbreak of the catastrophe and its elaboration. In short, it translates reality and makes it manageable by adapting it to the categories of the known.

To see how this principle works, we can look at a second sonnet by Cusano dealing with the saint of Vesuvius.

Del gran volar de' sempiterni allori,
pompe d'arco fastoso e trionfante,
son trionfati i fulmini sonori
che vibra da l'Olimpo Orco tonante.

Cener di Laomedonte era costante
riparo ad Ilio in bellicosi orrori;
né mai, finché il rapisse Itaco errante,
Troia s'incenerì ne' Greci ardori.

5

Ma qui per sacro allor, cener beato
contra le fiamme del tartareo Tauro
l'avanzo abbiam del martire svenato.

10

Ei su per gli archi de' cieli in carro d'auro
sa vincer morto e trionfar piagato:
e 'l suo cenere stesso al Santo è lauro.²³

dell'una e l'altra legge, e nella Sapienza di Roma primario professore, Rome, Ignazio de' Lazzari, 1660.

22. *Pestes, incendies, naufrages. Écritures du désastre au dix-septième siècle*, ed. by Françoise Lavocat, Turnhout, Brepols, 2011; Alfano, Barbato, Mazzucchi, *Tre catastrofi*.

23. See Biagio Cusano, "Per lo sangue di San Gennaro che bolle racchiuso in vaso di vetro", in *Poesie Sacre*, pp. 162-163.

This sonnet has a decidedly classicist background. It opens with a mythological reference typical of the Vesuvian compositions,²⁴ namely the battle between the Olympians and the Giants, and presents in the second quatrain a comparison between Naples and Troy. The fire of Naples is compared to that of Ilium under the attack of the Greeks (l. 6) through the reference to the mythological figure of *Laomedonte* (l. 5), one of the first kings of the ancient Asian city. The first tercet echoes two images from the previous quatrains: the laurel and the ashes (ll. 9, 14). These elements, which in celebratory poetry indicate glory and death, are repurposed here in a sacred sense since they belong to the *martire svenato* (l. 11), an ingenious concept by which to indicate St Gennaro. The last three lines continue the action of the saint, which is again described in epic language and allegorically overlaid by Apollo: he goes “su per gli archi de’ cieli in carro d’auro” (l. 12) and possesses the same miracle-working powers as the Greek god (which are obviously also virtues shared by Christ).

Before drawing further considerations from this poem concerning the “mediatic” tools used to represent the event, after having shown the saints and heroes in the act of halting the catastrophe, we also need to look at how religious institutions behaved in the poetry on disasters. This will give us a sufficiently broad picture to draw some conclusions.

5. *The Jesuits and the restoration of order*

The last poem analysed picks up one of the elements that link the poets chosen for this study: the Society of Jesus. This is an ode by the Jesuit poet Giacomo Lubrano.

Non sempre ozi canori,
 in man de le Sirene,
 tempran di molle cetra un suono infido,
 né di armonici fiori
 vestendo l’aure amene,

5

24. As will be explained below, in the analysis of the sonnets I have followed the breakdown identified by Mercedes Blanco-Morel, *Les rhétoriques de la pointe: Baltasar Gracián et le conceptisme en Europe*, Lille, A.N.R.T., 1990. The poem is thus structured in: *descriptio* (narration or description of the main situation); gradual hyperbolisation of said situation; *récit*, i.e. an insertion that interrupts the previous narration to develop a monologue (or introduce elements referring to classical mythology); and, finally, *pointe*, the “pointed” conclusion.

di cadenze omicide empiono il lido.
 Può crescere il calore
 in deliziose scole;
 da sibariti aurore
 nasce ancor più spartano il sole. 10

Di stoici sopracigli
 invan mi contraddite.
 Sì, sì fanno gli eroi cinti d'oliva
 Al trionfar de' perigli.
 A l'impresè più ardite 15
 virtuosa costanza i lussi avviva.
 Volo a l'assirie squadre
 di Betulia l'invitta;
 e tra pompe leggiadre,
 in faccia agli Oloferni ella è Giuditta. 20

Partenope, a' miei detti
 alza la fronte e godi
 se non ti appello imperiosa sede
 di superbi dilette,
 ma con empiree lodi, 25
 teatro di pietà, Sparta di Fede,
 epinicio di fama,
 per sentieri di tome,
 ad ammirar mi chiama
 fatte aquile di zel le tue colombe. 30

Ne l'orribile scempio
 de l'ultime sventure
 non ti mancar religiosi asceti,
 che con divoto esempio
 sgombrassero l'oscure 35
 nebbie di morte, intrepidi, inquieti.
 Per sì sante vittorie
 l'amor vuol ch'io distilli
 un Ippocren di glorie,
 balzamo de le muse, al mio Fiorilli. 40

In seno a Primavera
 cuoprì la falce il Fato
 a mieter vite, e fu la Parca Flora.
 L'aura, che lusinghiera
 Scherzosa pareva sul prato, 45

svegliò serpi di peste; e pianse allora
 Sebeto invelenito
 che la vedova fronda
 sozze alghe di Cocito
 sbattesse in mesto rio torbida l'onda. 50

Ahi, fra silenzi e lutti,
 palpiti d'agonia
 stampano in ogni luogo orme di duolo!
 Prima che muoian tutti,
 ne l'attonite vie 55
 cadaveri mal vivi atterra il suolo.

Entro ricchi palagi
 sfonda in più bare un letto;
 e'l timor de le stragi
 in nuvola di strali avvampa il tetto. 60

S'occidan sacerdoti
 da turbe penitenti,
 che in dir le colpe lor, le fan mortali.
 Chiudonsi i tempi a' voti
 di suppliche piangenti; 65
 né godon l'are immunità da' mali.

Da figli abbandonati
 fuggon padri inumani;
 e spirti battezzati
 in povero squallor spiran da cani. 70

A voi ostie di grazia
 rendo, o Genii celesti,
 che ne l'amico mio l'ingorda gola
 non irritò già sazia
 l'Idra di tanti pasti. 75

Ei, chiudendo nel cor alma Lojola,
 incontrò busti erranti,
 temerario, ma pio,
 onde a corpi anelanti
 vivesse, nel morire, il Cielo e Dio. 80

Di tessuti bitumi
 la carità ingegnosa,
 Carlo, ti pose in desio ispide lane.
 La man de fausti lumi

- spargea fiamma odorosa, 85
 e ministra fedel d'Angioli il Pane.
 Tutto di tutti errasti,
 non mai stanco a' conforti:
 dicano gli eroici fasti
 che qual nuovo Tobia sorgesti a' morti. 90
- Che val pauroso un petto
 se in eremi s'asconde,
 mesto contemplator d'ombre infingarde?
 L'apostolico affetto
 passeggiar sopra l'onde 95
 osa pur de' naufragi, al giel più arde
 di nembosi malori,
 né può sentir che vieti
 tra pubblici martori
 apostasia di tema i sagri atleti. 100
- Vantò l'antico Tebro
 un argine animato
 nel sol Coclito suo contro a l'Etruria,
 mentre volse in ginebro
 i lauri e l'Arno armato, 105
 e di gloria in trofei l'ondosa ingiuria.
 Di Curzio l'ardimento
 qual prodigio si noma,
 che 'l fatale spavento,
 precipitando, assicurò di Roma. 110
- A profani campioni
 non invida le palme
 la mia real Sirena, e l'arpa d'oro
 in profetici suoni,
 armando un mondo d'alme, 115
 poté sottrar di Stige a l'empio foro.
 Nel suo crater pomposo
 bevono acque di zelo;
 e con ardir pietoso,
 muoiono ebbri di Dio Nestori al Cielo.²⁵ 120

25. Giacomo Lubrano, *In tante trasparenze* [1690], ed. by Giancarlo Alfano and Gabriele Frasca, Naples, Cronopio, 2002, pp. 39-44.

Lubrano's ode opens with a decidedly epic atmosphere that is sustained throughout the poem. This justifies both the mythological figures and a language dense with references to Greek and Roman poetry, and the insertion of a religious panegyric in the "hero *topos*".²⁶

The first two verses consist of a lengthy pondering on the possibility of tempering the *molle cetra* for songs of happy rather than always tragic events (the *suono infido*, l. 3), as is instead the case for most 17th-century poetry. In the third verse, the poet apostrophises *Partenope* (l. 21), which is praised through numerous conventional epithets: "imperiosa sede, teatro di pietà, Sparta di Fede, epinicio di fama" (ll. 23-24, 26-27). These are, however, mere memories of what the city represented in the past, since it is now sunk in the "orribile scempio" of its "ultime sventure" (ll. 31-32). The section that is of greatest interest here is definitely the fourth verse. Despite being afflicted by the misfortunes of the century, as we have seen in the other poems, thanks to the "divoto esempio" of "religiosi asceti", who cleared away the "oscuere [...] nebbie di morte" (ll. 33, 35), Naples is described as a city that has always managed to rise again.

The following verse contains numerous allegories of the tragedies that have befallen Naples, such as the "primavera" represented by a *Parca* (namely, the loss of many young lives), "le serpi di peste [...] sul prato", the "Sebeto invelenito" compared to a *Cocytus* of "sozze alghè" (ll. 47-49). In short, the tragedies of Naples are truly countless and, "Fra silenzi e lutti, / palpiti d'agonia [...] timor de le stragi" (ll. 51-52, 59), the grief of the city occupies the sixth and seventh verses too, while in the eighth there is an interruption of the long description when the poet apostrophises Carlo Fiorilli. The "Genii celesti" (l. 72) are the dedicatees of a prayer exalting the Jesuit that divide the composition into two parts, with his praises on one side and the praises of Naples on the other. In the penultimate verse, Fiorilli is actually compared to Horatius Cocles (l. 103), the hero who defended Rome against the Etruscan army of Porsena, and to Marcus Curtius (l. 107), the legendary warrior who was said to have saved Rome by hurling himself into the chasm that was to have swallowed it up. The last verse

26. The panegyric poem is a sub-category of the ode that adopts the same metric model. It differs from the ode in terms of subject, since the panegyric is exclusively celebratory and excludes religious themes. It probably derives from what Scaligero defined as *peana* and is one of the most common poetic modules of the 17th century: Giulio Cesare Scaligero, *Poetices libri septem* [1561], ed. by Giovanni Vanini and Francesco Paolo Raimondi, Galatina, Congedo, 1990.

returns to Naples in a heartfelt testimony of hope for the city which as a “real Sirena, non invida le palme [...] A profani campioni” (namely Cocles and Curtius, ll. 111-113). She will indeed always succeed in avoiding “l’empio foro [...] di Stige”, and the beauty of her “crater pomposo” (a Greek word indicating the bay of Naples) will endure eternally in unaltered splendour (ll. 116-117).

So, in this poem, too, we have a series of emblems – heroes with garlands of olive, the doves of peace, the eagles of victory – the *topoi* of disaster such as the vanity of earthly wealth and references to religious figures like Loyola or heroic figures like Cocles and Curtius. In short, the narration of disaster in the 17th-century lyric poetry of southern Italy is highly conventional. It follows what is a practically fixed representational pattern that can be divided into three sections: 1) a description of the event, which may be realistic or hyperbolic; 2) a reference to other catastrophes insofar as inherent to a unified vision of divine wrath; 3) the inclusion of mythological tales that set the poem within a consolidated tradition.²⁷ Having illustrated the conventional nature of the catastrophic representation in both figural and stylistic terms, we can draw some conclusions by bringing together the various strands that have emerged from the analysis so far.

6. Conclusion

Returning for a moment to the sonnet on Viceroy Guevara, a particularly important aspect needs to be stressed. As recently pointed out by Gaetana Rossi, the viceroy did not merely repress the revolt but also strove to reinstate Catholic orthodoxy. With the help of the Jesuits, he mustered the moderate factions among the populace and the nobility around the Spanish Crown.²⁸ So, Guevara used the Jesuits to mediate with the opposing factions among the Neapolitans. What does this have to do with lyric poetry? And how is the political mediation of the Jesuits shown in the works dealing with disasters? Let us see.

27. Blanco-Morel, *Les rhétoriques de la pointe*, p. 263.

28. Gaetana Rossi, *Il viceré. La restaurazione del Viceré Oñate a Napoli dopo la rivoluzione di Masaniello secondo la corrispondenza del residente Vincenzo De' Medici (1648-1650)*, Novara, Ladolfi, 2017, p. 34.

Firstly, all the poets dealt with in this chapter were nobles; if not actually Jesuits, they were closely linked to the ecclesiastical community, and hence opposed to the claims upheld by the people in the revolt.²⁹ Secondly, it is well known that Baroque society was permeated by Jesuit culture; further, it was clearly religion that largely underpinned the interconnection illustrated in these poems between the various calamities of the 17th century. The catastrophes had a single cause: man's sins before God, and they were therefore associated in the religious imaginary of a society that saw disasters as signs of divine wrath.³⁰ Thirdly, as Alfano has shown, it was precisely the Jesuits who leveraged this fear for their conservatist ends, to the point of creating an authentic "orthopaedics of the image",³¹ and used a method that follows the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignacio de Loyola.³² Taking this argument further, it is interesting to observe how the figure of St Gennaro in the above poems can also be analysed using the instruments of Jesuit rhetoric (Fig. 3).

In short, the spiritual exercises of Loyola are a species of meditation in which the imagination has the quality of encyclopaedic knowledge. Through these exercises, the figures in the literal text (I), for instance

29. As shown by Montella, Antonio de' Rossi was close to the Jesuits insofar as he was a member of the Propaganda Fide of Naples. Matt argues that Giacomo Lubrano joined the Society of Jesus in 1635 at the age of 17, completing the full cycle of studies to become a sacred orator: Luigi Matt, "Giacomo Lubrano", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. LXVI, Rome, Treccani, 2006. Biagio Cusano was a professor of canon law and, as Contarino has shown, was fully integrated into the Counter-Reformation milieu: Rosario Contarino, "Biagio Cusano", in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. XXXI, Rome, Treccani, 1985.

30. The *relazioni* of the time supply ample evidence of this interpretation. See at least Giulio Cesare Braccini, *Dell'incendio fattosi nel Vesuvio a XVI di dicembre M.DC. XXXI. e delle sue cause ed effetti, con la narrazione di quanto è seguito in esso per tutto marzo 1632, e con la storia di, tutti gli altri incendij nel medesimo monte avvenuti*, Naples, Secondino Roncagliolo, 1632.

31. Lubrano, *In tante trasparenze*. The syntagm "orthopaedics of the image" is taken up by Roland Barthes, "Loyola" [1971], in *Sade, Fourier, Loyola. La scrittura come eccesso*, ed. by Lidia Lonzi and Renzo Guidieri, Turin, Einaudi, 1997.

32. Heinrich F. Plett, "Enargeia in Mnemonics and Meditation", in *Jesuit Image Theory*, ed. by Wietse de Boer, Karl A. E. Enenkel and Walter S. Melion, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2016, pp. 79-84: 80; Andrea Battistini, *Il barocco: cultura, miti, immagini*, Rome, Salerno Editrice, 2000, pp. 36-50. See also Andrea Battistini, "La retorica nei manuali per i collegi", in *Galileo e i gesuiti. Miti letterari e retorica della scienza*, ed. by Andrea Battistini, Milan, Vita e Pensiero, 2000, pp. 185-238.



Fig. 3. St Gennaro and the spiritual exercises of Ignatius of Loyola.

St Gennaro, can be represented by terms (II) that express the general sense of the figure or by allegorical descriptions (III). These terms or descriptions serve to explain the different meanings of the figure, and refer in turn to a universal symbolism (IV).

The semiotic diagram in Fig. 3 casts light on the “cultural mediatisation” of St Gennaro and his cult in Neapolitan society. The image employs both the semantic function of protector and condottiere – an allegory of military virtues – and that of saviour, by analogy with the spiritual virtues of Christ. There is nothing odd about the fact that this diagram perfectly fits the figures in these poems – all things considered, it even works with Guevara – since the poets employed the rhetorical instruments of Jesuit pedagogy: namely *enargeia*, emblems and the mottoes that accompanied such emblems. Therefore, these mental images were used to steer the ideology of the citizens or, in the case of natural catastrophes, to modify the perception of the disaster through the simplification of a historical event.³³

This desire to control and manipulate the disaster can also be seen in the social role of literature in the 17th century and the mechanisms through which it operated, and not only in Naples. A single example is sufficient, thus ending with a glance beyond the kingdom itself.

33. See D’Alessio, *Contagi*.

In 1632, just seven months after the eruption of Vesuvius, the *Scelta di poesie nell'incendio del Vesuvio* edited by Cardinal Urbano Giorgi was printed by Corbelletti in Rome.³⁴ The poems in the anthology describe both the eruption of 1631, and the earthquake that followed, using bloody and apocalyptic imagery. The intention was to frame the disaster as an event caused by God's anger with man, an interpretation clearly influenced by the Jesuit culture of the time. This is effected through a mediatic action designed to provoke a feeling of terror in the reader, placing the Church and its saints as the sole guarantors of salvation in the face of the disaster. The objective here is clearly to lead an entire community towards redemption and, since this was an anthology that gravitated around the Roman Curia, all the poets included belonged to the ecclesiastical ambit, and many were abbots and cardinals. Further, the collection was dedicated to the nephew of the then pope, Urban VIII, known as "the heroic Barberini", and he too was represented in the act of opposing the catastrophe.³⁵ As a result, the anthology appears to be yoked to a species of papal patronage so that we can glimpse the long arm of the religious institution behind the composition and circulation of the poems.

I have similarly sought to cast light on the link between the poets of the ecclesiastical milieu and the Spanish Crown, demonstrating the political mediation of the Jesuits in the disaster poetry of the Viceroyalty of Naples. In short, these poems represent the popular media that allowed the Neapolitan nobles to pull the strings of public information.³⁶ This is

34. Urbano Giorgi, *Scelta di poesie nell'incendio del Vesuvio* [1632], ed. by Antonio Perrone and Claudia Borrelli, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2021. The *Scelta di poesie* is an anthology on the single topic of the 1631 eruption of Vesuvius. It contains poems by 32 Italian writers, including Giambattista Basile, Claudio Achillini and Antonio Bruni, some of the most famous poets of the time.

35. Cardinal Antonio Barberini (Rome, 1608 – Nemi, 1671) was Grand Prior of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem and Supreme Commander of the Papal Army. His political career ended after the defeat of the papal troops in the War of Castro (1644), followed by the death of his protector, Urban VIII.

36. Numerous aspects illustrate the function of disaster poetry as a consumer good, and thus a tool for controlling civic ideology. Since much of this volume focuses on analysis of the printed *relazioni* and *avvisi* on the catastrophes of the 17th century, it seems useful to emphasise the relation between this genre of poetry and prose works. There are numerous cases of lyric compositions included in works of a different kind: sonnets appearing at the beginning of scientific treatises, *canzoni* accompanying accounts of disasters and verses printed on single sheets functioning as inserts for the printed daily *avvisi*. This affinity

why Masaniello is a monster while Guevara is a god, and it is also why St Gennaro is as tied up with the revolt as he is with the eruption, and why the plague offers the opportunity for the religious institutions to engage in charitable actions. The disaster poetry is therefore part and parcel of a mechanism of control and manipulation of information through which the Jesuits and the 17th-century top brass championed the establishment and, through the images of saints, heroes, and condottieri, transmitted ideologies aimed at the conservation of the status quo.

between very different types of publication is highly significant, since it provides pertinent proof of the mediatic role of poetry at the time. For a single example clarifying this point, see Camillo Volpe, *Breve discorso dell'incendio del Monte Vesuvio e dei suoi effetti*, Naples, Lazzaro Scoriggio, 1632, which contains no less than seven poems on the disaster of 1631.

II

Gestures, Perspectives and Images

JOSÉ A. ORTIZ

Devotion and Epidemics: The Relevance of St Vincent Ferrer in Outbreaks of Plague

Illness is part of life. Susan Sontag describes it this way:

Illness is the night-side of life, a more onerous citizenship. Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and in the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged, at least for a spell, to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place.¹

In today's world, we have gradually become aware of the importance of disease in society. Lieberman highlights the problem of contagion in modern and contemporary societies:

Living in larger, denser communities is socially stimulating and economically profitable, but such communities also pose life-threatening health hazards. The biggest peril is contagion. There are many kinds of infectious disease, but all of them are caused by organisms that make a living by invading hosts, feeding off their bodies, reproducing, and then being transmitted to new hosts to keep the cycle going.²

The fear of contagion and the spread of morbidity, to employ terminology now no longer in use, strongly marked human beings in historical times, and continues to do so today. Plague was undoubtedly a major concern and is one of the common focuses of the historiography of epidemics. This infectious disease, caused by the bacterium *Yersinia Pestis*, has been one of the most devastating in history. With strong

1. Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978, p. 3.

2. Daniel Lieberman, *The Story of the Human Body. Evolution, Health and Disease*, New York, Vintage Books, 2014, p. 199.

biblical resonances and cyclical recurrence, it caused high mortality rates, especially during the period of the Black Death in the Middle Ages. Concepts such as buboes, the inflammation of lymph nodes and the bubonic plague are part of the collective imagination of historical, artistic, medical, anthropological, sociological and literary studies. Authors like Giovanni Boccaccio in the *Decameron*, Daniel Defoe in the *Diary of a Plague Year* and Albert Camus in *La Peste* have presented the processes of infection and their effect on people. Fear, doubt, desolation, contagion, death, uncertainty and fear of the other are among the themes we can draw from the literature related to the plague.

But, having briefly presented the disease, the aim of this study is to deal with the role of religion in the face of an epidemic outbreak, specifically the role of St Vincent Ferrer as an intercessor saint. To look at this union between holiness and health, we first propose an approach based on medical and religious anthropology to outline a theoretical framework for the study. Next, we suggest an analysis of the figure of the Valencian saint in front of the plague, through hagiographical texts and works of art from between the 16th and 18th centuries, leading to a final reflection on the relevance of devotion to other outbreaks of disease: cholera in the 19th century and COVID-19 in much more recent times.

1. *Devotion and epidemics: a view based on medical and religious anthropology*

In the 1632 publication by Joan Francesc Rosell, entitled *El verdadero conocimiento de la peste, sus causas, señales, preservación y curación*, we read:

Primeramente, conviene, que la limpieza comience por el alma, confesando, y comulgando a menudo, como esta dicho, y traer algunas reliquias de los Santos abogados de la peste, o de otros, que cada uno tuviere por protectores, y a quien acude en sus necesidades, para alcanzar el remedio, que pretende de la bondad divina, con quien se ha de confiar más, porque los otros remedios no serán de provecho, sino nos socorre Dios nuestro Señor.³

3. Joan Francesc Rosell, *El verdadero conocimiento de la peste, sus causas, señales, preservación y curación*, Barcelona, por Sebastian i Iaime Mathevad, 1632, p. 70r. Here, I have decided to adapt the spelling to current standards.

This 17th-century manual, an example of the knowledge of its time on the spread and treatment of the plague, provides us with different theories and remedies, although religion is always the starting point.⁴ Devotion to advocates against the plague and to their relics guarantees human beings a cure. Medical anthropology has analysed the evolution of this connection between magic, religion and science. This evolutionist process, as described by Josep Maria Comelles and Ángel Martínez Hernández in their works, presents scientific medical institutionalisation as another step towards leaving popular or folk medicine behind.⁵ As the health theories of the 18th and 19th centuries brought us closer to current clinical models, disease ceased to be seen as a divine punishment, and its actual causes began to be analysed. But, despite this new research and healthcare paradigm, the complex web of meanings, traditions, beliefs and customs remains in place to this day. Thus, the concept of *disease* – pathology, in scientific parlance – must be related to the concept of *illness*, the set of cultural conceptions and social practices that make up an ethnomedical system. Where these two concepts, *disease* and *illness*, come together, we can analyse them from a historical, cultural, artistic, religious and anthropological perspective.

Malinowski's approach in his book, *Magic, Science and Religion*, investigates magical acts and religious ritual.⁶ In the first of these, the solution to the problem is provided by an expert, a magician or a shaman; in the second, the will of the gods must be propitiated with prayers, offerings or a planned series of actions. Both models seek to respond to the lack of causal explanations, albeit by resorting to non-rational solutions. To alleviate the anguish and discomfort of ignorance, human beings have resorted to ritual. In the face of illness, expiatory rites are intended to achieve redemption from what is considered to be a fault or divine punishment. To force the change from sick to healthy, religion maintains promises, votive offerings, prayers, processions and other ceremonial elements. Particularly in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Church extols its healing role through

4. Rubén Darío Gómez Arias, “¿Qué se ha entendido por salud y enfermedad?”, *Facultad Nacional de Salud Pública: El escenario para la salud pública desde la ciencia*, 36/1 (2018), pp. 64-102.

5. Josep Maria Comelles, Ángel Martínez Hernández, *Enfermedad, cultura y sociedad. Un ensayo sobre las relaciones entre la Antropología Social y la Medicina*, Madrid, Eudema, 1993; Ángel Martínez Hernández, *Antropología médica. Teorías sobre la cultura, el poder y la enfermedad* [2008], Barcelona, Anthropos, 2015.

6. Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magia, ciencia, religión* [1948], Barcelona, Ariel, 1994.

the ideas presented. Divine treatment, analysed by Salvador Rodríguez Becerra, allows us to speak of a miracle-working Church.⁷

The intermingling of the religious and the medical in the act of healing is still present in contemporary healthcare formulas.⁸ Holiness and healing maintain a close link that allows us to evoke the historical relationship between power and healing through miracle-working kings, when healing was a mechanism for bringing them closer to their subjects and justifying their position.⁹ In both models, power, whether wielded by religion or monarchy, is directly linked to the need for responses and solutions that society has shown throughout history.

Thus, *religious healing*, or spiritual healing, still plays a prominent role in the Western world today. On the one hand, it can bring positive effects through the healthy lifestyles proposed and, thanks to community social support networks, sick people can find a positive context as their disease develops, even if active medical treatments are not offered. Spirituality in medicine also has a relationship with the placebo and nocebo effects that have recently been studied extensively by researchers like Patrick Lindenfors. Placebo is usually used in reference to a substance which, lacking therapeutic action in itself, produces some favourable effect on the patient if the patient is convinced that the substance really is able to act in this way. At the other end of the spectrum, the nocebo effect is the negative suggestion: the expectation that the substance administered will be useless or ineffective. Both placebo and nocebo can be analysed in the field of spiritual healing:

There are clear parallels between religious healing practices and currently identified methods that induce placebo effects. Placebo and nocebo responses can make you think that you are better or worse, but they can also make you actually better or worse through conditioned responses. Religious practices may thus have both perceived and actual effects on health, through

7. Salvador Rodríguez Becerra, “Enfermedades humanas con tratamiento divino. La curación mágico religiosa en Andalucía”, in *Creer y curar: la medicina popular*, ed. by José Antonio González Alcantud and Salvador Rodríguez Becerra, Granada, Diputación Provincial de Granada, 1996, pp. 529-544.

8. François Laplantine, “La Maladie, la guérison et le sacré”, *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 54/1 (1982), pp. 63-76.

9. Marc Bloch, *Los reyes taumaturgos* [1924], Mexico D. C., Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988; Víctor Mínguez Cornelles, “Los emperadores taumaturgos: curaciones prodigiosas desde Trajano a Napoleón”, *Potestas*, 5 (2012), pp. 43-81.

aforementioned lifestyle effects, social support networks, and through placebo responses.¹⁰

Religion can provide us with a series of mechanisms, such as lifestyle, support networks and the placebo effect, which can aid recovery. However, excessive faith and a negative outcome that frustrates expectations can also cause the nocebo effect. Among these current ideas, we are not talking about miracle cures such as those advocated by the Pentecostal Church; we are referring to an appropriate context of mutual support that can be beneficial as long as the treatments prescribed by health professionals are followed. This approach of mutual respect between religion and science is a long way from the healing miracles described by the Frenchman Joris-Karl Huysmans in his 1891 novel *Là-bas*:

Je sais bien que c'est confondant, et que, lorsque je parle de la puissance de cet homme à mes confrères, ils sourient d'un air supérieur ou me servent le précieux argument qu'ils ont inventé pour expliquer les guérisons opérées par le Christ ou par la Vierge. Ça consiste à frapper l'imagination du malade, à lui suggérer la volonté de guérir, à le persuader qu'il est bien portant, à l'hypnotiser, en quelque sorte, à l'état de veille, moyennant quoi, les jambes tordues se redressent, les plaies disparaissent, les poumons des phtisiques se bouchent, les cancers deviennent des bobos anodins et les aveugles voient clair! Et voilà tout ce qu'ils ont trouvé pour nier le surnaturel de certaines cures! On se demande vraiment pourquoi ils n'usent pas eux-mêmes de cette méthode, puisque c'est si simple!¹¹

Having set out the introductory theoretical framework in which to situate our research, we propose to look at the close relationship between holiness and healing in the face of plague outbreaks. We will focus on the figure of St Vincent Ferrer as an advocate against the plague. However, in the Western tradition, there are several saints who have been associated with the disease. These include St Sebastian, St Roch and St Charles Borromeo, as well as the Virgin Mary as protector against calamities.¹²

10. Patrick Lindenforms, "Divine Placebo: Health and the Evolution of Religion", *Human Ecology*, 47 (2019), pp. 157-163: 160.

11. Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Là-bas*, Paris, Tresse & Stock Éditeurs, 1891, pp. 420-421.

12. Franco Mormando, Thomas Worcester, *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque*, Philadelphia, Penn State University Press, 2008; Samuel Kline Cohn, *Cultures of Plague: Medical Thinking at the End of the Renaissance*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010; Jessica Ortega, "Pestilence and Prayer Saints and the Art of the Plague in Italy from 1370-1600", *HIM 1990-2015*, 1367 (2012), <http://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorsthesis1990-2015/1367> (accessed 30 March 2021).

José Luis Betrán has described the official and popular saints' calendar in times of plague and reminded us that, beyond the miraculous healings in the hagiographies, a pastoral mission was created for the men of the Church fighting against the pandemic enemy, especially for members of religious orders who, invoking charity, attended to mourners as an act of moral perfection and personal sacrifice:

Morir entre apestados sublimaba el heroísmo del servicio en cuanto que respondía a una voluntaria elección o a una obediencia aceptada como expresiones válidas y equiparables al martirio tradicional. Bajo este nuevo orden de cosas, los signos de la santidad ya no se manifestarían como en el pasado medieval por elementos externos como la incorruptibilidad del cuerpo sino por el anhelo de perfección moral y por el sacrificio personal.¹³

The model of holiness takes on a new focus with direct health and spiritual care. In the image of Jesus, following biblical references such as the parable of the Good Samaritan, *imitatio christi* is also a model of civic behaviour that leads to canonisation.¹⁴ At the same time, under the thesis of the Counter-Reformation, the pantheon of plague-fighting saints replaced traditional cults with new ones rooted in the sphere of political, diocesan or municipal power. This is the case with the man at the centre of our research: St Vincent Ferrer.

13. José Luis Betrán, *La peste en la Barcelona de los Austrias*, Lleida, Editorial Milenio, 1996, pp. 470-471.

14. "Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them" (Luke 4.40); "Once Jesus was in a town where there was a man who was suffering from a dreaded skin disease. When he saw Jesus, he threw himself down and begged him, 'Sir, if you want to, you can make me clean!' Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him. 'I do want to,' he answered. 'Be clean!' At once the disease left the man" (Luke 5.12-13), and "After the sun had set and evening had come, people brought to Jesus all the sick and those who had demons. All the people of the town gathered in front of the house. Jesus healed many who were sick with all kinds of diseases and drove out many demons. [...]" (Mark 1.32-34) are three of the many references to healing found in the texts of the Bible. This healing facet is one of the aspects of corporal mercy we can extract from the following biblical excerpt: "Then the King will say to the people on his right, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father! Come and possess the kingdom which has been prepared for you ever since the creation of the world. I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me'" (Matthew 25, 34-36).

2. *St Vincent Ferrer against the plague*

When he died on 5 April 1419, Vincent Ferrer's body was buried in Vannes, the French town where he was preaching. This linked him closely to the Breton ducal house, which promoted his canonisation. This eventually took place in 1455. The possession of Vincent's mortal remains was used in the propaganda system of the Dominicans and the Duchy. The strategy of the Montfort family, with its active participation in the canonical cause of the saint, is based on an instrumentalisation of sanctity as an element of social cohesion and self-consolidation in Breton territory through a direct relationship with the saint. The sacred legitimisation of the power of the Breton dukes came through their association with St Vincent Ferrer during his life and as promoters of his cause after his death. Laura Ackerman sums it up very succinctly in her publication on the saint in question: "in life and in death Vincent became an important symbol for the powerful in Brittany".¹⁵

His tomb was the scene of healing miracles performed beyond life, as recounted in the Breton canonisation process. Alberto Velasco's compilation evokes both healing in life, through the laying on of hands and making the sign of the cross, and pilgrimages to his burial place under the *ad sanctos* influence of the presence of the buried body.¹⁶ The hagiographical accounts, and the documents related to the canonisation process preserved in different European institutions (Vannes, Rome and Valencia),¹⁷ emphasise St Vincent's facet as a miracle worker.

Of particular interest are the episodes of prodigious healing, which place him among the leading figures of religious healing. Already during his childhood, for example, Vincent had given proof of his unique power against illness, saving the child Antonio Garrigues from ulcers on his neck, just by touching them with his powerful hands. As Francisco Diago states in his famous *Vita* published in 1600, episodes like this had to be interpreted as the clear demonstration that "Dios infundió al Santo en el Baptismo la gracia de hacer milagros y por consiguiente las otras gratis dadas".¹⁸

15. Laura Ackerman Smoller, *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby: The Cult of Vincent Ferrer in Medieval Early Modern Europe*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2014, p. 20.

16. Alberto Velasco González, "De València a Vannes: culte, devoció i relíquies de Sant Vicent Ferrer", *Acta històrica et archaeologica mediaevalia*, 29 (2008), pp. 395-436.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Francisco Diago, *Historia de la vida, milagros, muerte y discípulos del bienaventurado predicador apostólico Valenciano S. Vicente Ferrer dividida en dos libros:*

Beyond this religious and political use of the body, the succession of miracles was undoubtedly a focus of attraction and pilgrimage to Vannes. The saint's fame spread to other European territories linked to his preaching and, through hagiographies and the publication of his sermons, also reached the Hispanic realms, specifically Valencia, where he was from. Particularly active in this process of promoting the cult of St Vincent were the Dominicans, to whom we owe various hagiographical texts from the 16th century onwards.¹⁹

Valencia was one of the first cities to be endowed with his relics. In addition to undertaking a delicate process of building political contacts to obtain and transfer relics of his body, the city was also able to obtain some relics through contacts. It was also in Valencia that the first paintings of the saint were commissioned and the first celebrations dedicated to him were organised. This contributed significantly to the incorporation of his cult in the local religious imagination. One of the promoters was the viceroy and archbishop Juan de Ribera (1532-1611), who in 1601 managed to transfer the saint's shin bone and part of his shroud to Valencia. Obtaining these prestigious sacred remains had been possible thanks to the contacts that the friars had built with prominent French ecclesiastics. Particularly decisive were the negotiations with Cardinal Pedro de Gondi and his brother Jerónimo, knight of honour of the Queen of France, Marie de' Medici (1573-1642), who authorised the handover:

La canilla segunda de la pierna entera del bendito y esclarecido San Vicente Ferrer, patrón de esta ciudad y reino, la cual hubimos por particular misericordia de Nuestro Señor, alcanzada por los merecimientos e intercesión de este gloriosísimo Patrón; habiéndose ofrecido en esta empresa dificultades tan grandes, que es milagro notorio haberse vencido, según lo refieren Juan Bautista Almoradí, Pedro Martínez Santos y Juan Balón, criados de nuestra

con una verdadera relación de la Santa reliquia que de su cuerpo ha llegado a Valencia, y de los milagros que ha obrado, y de las fiestas que se le han hecho, Barcelona, en la imprenta de Gabriel Graells y Giraldo Dotil, 1600, p. 25.

19. The hagiographies of St Vincent Ferrer were written mainly by members of the Dominican community between the 15th and 18th centuries. For more information on the editions and their chronology, see Curt Witlin, "Sobre les Vides de Sant Vicent Ferrer compilades per Ranzano, Antonio i Miquel Peres; amb una edició de la Vita Sancti Vicentii de Francesc de Castiglione", *Anuari de l'agrupació borrianenca de cultura*, 4 (1994), pp. 5-27; Carme Arronis-Llopis, "El relato de la vida de san Vicente Ferrer antes y después de Trento", *RILCE: Revista de Filología Hispánica*, 36/2 (2020), pp. 499-526.

casa, que fueron enviados por mí a Paris con esta pretensión, y partieron a 22 de Febrero de 1601. Entregóseles la santa y preciosa reliquia a 14 de Setiembre de dicho año, en Vannes.²⁰

St Vincent Ferrer's healing activity was particularly focused on the plague. As can be deduced from the Breton canonisation questionnaire, almost half of his documented miraculous healing events were related to the plague. Indeed, the outbreaks that occurred in 1450 had facilitated the spread of his cult in Breton territory to the point where the rumour spread that if he was not canonised, the plague would not cease. As proof of this, one of the saint's first biographers, Vicente Justiniano Antist, included in *La vida y historia del apostólico predicador Sant Vicente Ferrer*, in 1575, up to eleven cases of his curing the plague from the year 1452, including the following examples:

Sería nunca acabar si quisiésemos contar uno a uno todos los milagros que cuenta el proceso hechos por San Vicente en esta materia. Ellos son infinitos y todos se resuelven en estas palabras: Fulano o Zutano estuvo herido gravemente, o llegó ya al paso de la muerte, y encomendándose a San Vicente, de allí a poco, y hartas veces súbitamente, alcanzó salud. También hubo otros a quien, por ser sus devotos, preservó de peste, muriéndose muchas personas en el vecindado.²¹

The hagiographical references to healing can be related to 20th-century comparative religion studies looking at *the saintly* in the face of fear and horror, or, in our case, the fear of death, the horror at illness and devotion to St Vincent Ferrer as salvation:

Lo que el hombre no comprende y lo que le horroriza en la esfera de su acción; lo que los sucesos naturales, acontecimientos, hombres, animales o plantas, ha sido causa de extrañeza, sorpresa o pasmo, sobre todo si va unido a una fuerza pujante o al horror, ha despertado siempre y atraído hacia si el pavor demoníaco y se ha convertido en *portentum, prodigium, miraculum*.²²

Another biographer to focus on Vincent's plague-fighting qualities was Miquel Peres. In the prologue to his *Vita* or life of St Vincent, the author

20. Cesáreo Fernández Duro, "Restos mortales de San Vicente Ferrer", *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, 9 (1886), pp. 255-260: 259-260.

21. Vicente Justiniano Antist, *La vida y historia del apostólico predicador Sant Vicente Ferrer*, Valencia, en casa de Pedro de Huete, 1575, p. 410.

22. Rudolf Otto, *Lo santo. Lo racional y lo irracional en la idea de Dios* [1936], Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2016, pp. 145-146.

publishes a specific Latin prayer to be recited to overcome pestilential diseases. He introduces it as follows: “Estando este glorioso sancto en una ciudad que morían de pestilencia, fue persuadido de algunos a que les diese alguna oración, y él les dio la que se sigue con la qual (mediante el favor divino) serían libres de aquel mal”.²³ This prayer must have been very popular, as it is published in a Valencian booklet of 1591, as well as in Vidal y Micó’s biography, *Historia de la portentosa vida y milagros del valenciano S. Vicente Ferrer* (1735). The Latin text offers a translation into Spanish:

Cristo vence, Cristo reina, Cristo manda, Cristo de todo mal me defienda. Jesús Nazareno Rey de los judíos (título triunfal) tened misericordia de nosotros. Por la señal de la Santa Cruz, y por los méritos de la gloriosa, y siempre Virgen María vuestra Madre, y Señora nuestra, y de vuestros Santos Mártires, y Confesores Fabián, Sebastián, Nicasio, Anastasia, Martín, Roque, Cosme y Damián, libradnos Jesucristo Dios nuestro de nuestros enemigos, y de toda peste, mal contagioso, y de muerte repentina, y eterna; Dios Santo, Dios Fuerte, Santo Inmortal, y Misericordioso Salvador nuestro, tened misericordia de nosotros. Y se encarnó por obra del Espíritu Santo de la Virgen María, y se hizo hombre.²⁴

In this same text by Vidal y Micó, in a previous chapter on the saint’s preaching, reference is made to St Vincent Ferrer’s healing action using holy water, which applies four virtues to the body, the third and fourth of which are healing virtues:

La tercera es, curar de enfermedades, porque ni Hipócrates, ni Avicena, nunca hallaron medicina tan general contra todas ellas, y así en cualquier mal vuestro, y de los animales, tomadla con fe, y reverencia, cruz, y nombre de Jesús. La cuarta es excluir mortalidades, y pestilencias, purificando con ella el aire, y haciendo devotas procesiones.²⁵

The healing properties of St Vicente’s water are also discussed in the aforementioned biography by Francisco Diago. In addition to describing

23. Miquel Peres, *La Vida de Sant Vicente Ferrer: con muchos milagros que obró así en su bienaventurada vida como después de su muerte*, Valencia, Herederos de Joan Navarro, 1589, p. 1.

24. Francisco Vidal y Micó, *Historia de la portentosa vida y milagros del valenciano S. Vicente Ferrer: comentada la que escribió Fr. Serafín Thomas Miquel: enmendada en algo la cronología y añadidas reflexiones al espíritu al fin de los capítulos*, Valencia, en la oficina de Joseph Estevan Dolz, 1735, p. 334.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

several cases of curing the plague (including one that took place in Barcelona in 1375), he presents holy water as another valuable remedy:

Y porque la pestilencia es también de este género, les dio el mismo remedio contra ella, aconsejando que usase del si fuese posible algún sacerdote devoto yendo por el pueblo y casas diciendo juntamente la oración que la Iglesia usa para el exorcismo del agua, que entre muchas otras palabras contiene las que siguen: *Ut quic quid indomibus vel in locis fidelius [...] immunditia, liberatur a noxa, non illic refideat spiiritus pestilens, non aura corrumpens.*²⁶

These extracts make clear how, in the early modern age, religious beliefs played a fundamental role in the interpretation of contagious disease as a consequence of divine will. Hence the need to resort to relics and holy water, which, together with prayers, had the power to heal and cure. As has been shown by socio-anthropological research, the placebo effect generated by the ritual practices featuring sacred remains undoubtedly favoured the improvement of the state of mind, although the consequent healing of the sick person is called into question if a scientific view of contagious processes is taken.

Other texts, such as Valdecebro's, do not delve as deeply into St Vincent's powers to fight the plague.²⁷ This idea was already expressed by Ackerman in relation to Ranzano's hagiographical account, considered to be the first hagiography of the saint, in 1455.²⁸ The fact that the role of intercession is not emphasised in the epidemic period may be due to the intention to present the saint in the early texts along more official lines as a model to be imitated, rather than to emphasise the healing aspect that related him to more popular examples of sanctity.²⁹ Neither the aforementioned text by Ranzano, nor the texts from the canonisation processes, use the image of the saint fighting the plague in the way the Breton process does. On a historical level, Vannes and its region was suffering from an outbreak of plague, which may also help us understand the increased importance of

26. Diago, *Historia de la vida*, p. 249. The reference to the plague in Barcelona in 1375 coincides with the miracle the saint performed in Barcelona in the face of famine during the plague period, when, in his sermon to citizens, he prophesied the arrival of wheat by sea (*ibid.*, pp. 50-52).

27. Andrés Ferrer de Valdecebro, *Historia de la vida maravillosa y admirable del segundo Pablo apóstol de Valencia S. Vicente Ferrer* [1682], Madrid, Manuel de Sancha, 1781.

28. Witlin, "Sobre les Vides de Sant Vicent Ferrer".

29. Ackerman Smoller, *The Saint and the Chopped-Up Baby*, p. 106.

a facet of the saint that had not been highlighted in other European areas in the period before 1455. In Brittany, St Vincent Ferrer offered hope at a time of despair, and the ducal house, once again, was able to instrumentalise the saint as a social cure through his canonisation, as discussed above when dealing with the concept of religious healing.

The promotion of the cult of St Vincent Ferrer in times of plague is reflected both in the hagiographical literature produced and in the visual testimonies. There are several examples of images that present the saint in relation to this advocacy.³⁰ In this sense, we can establish two major iconographic categories devoted to St Vincent Ferrer and to the theme of the plague. These are part of the broad, well-developed repertoire of images and *topoi* that represent the saint preaching, interceding on political issues or passing on the apocalyptic message, to take just three examples.

First of all, the saint is usually depicted while curing those affected by disease. This can be seen in the famous painting by Ercole de' Roberti (c. 1451-1496) from Ferrara, or in another painted by the Valencian Vicent Massip or Macip (c. 1475-1550). The artist from Ferrara created the predella for the altarpiece that his master, Francesco del Cossa (c. 1435-c. 1477) created for the Griffoni Chapel in the church of San Petronio, Bologna, in 1473, publicising the recent canonisation of St Vincent. The *Altarpiece of San Vicente Ferrer* by Vicent Macip, kept in the Museo Diocesano in Segorbe and dated to between 1525 and 1529, should be linked to the outbreak of plague that took place in Segorbe around 1523. This would give us an epidemic context, which would explain the iconography selected.

In a second group, we find the saint together with St Sebastian and St Roch, completing a trio invoked against the plague. This is the case of the *pala d'altare* by Domenico Ghirlandaio (1449-1494) for the Malatesta family in Rimini, given as an *ex voto* by Pandolfo IV Malatesta in 1493 after having escaped the conspiracy of his relative Galeotto Malatesta in 1492 and the plague. The Valencian is similarly placed, in this case

30. José A. Ortiz García, "Santidad y sanidad: San Vicente Ferrer abogado contra la pestilencia", in *A la luz de Roma, Santos y santidad en el barroco iberoamericano*, ed. by Fernando Quiles García, José Jaime García Bernal, Paolo Broggio, Marcello Fagiolo Dell'Arco, 3 vols, vol. II, Seville-Rome, Universidad Pablo de Olavide-Roma Tre-Press, 2020, pp. 163-180.

between St Christopher and St Sebastian, in the *Polyptych of St Vincent Ferrer* by Giovanni Bellini (c. 1430-1516), made between 1464 and 1468 for the Basilica of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice when Ferrer was raised to the altars.³¹

The painting echoes the miracles hagiographers included in the medieval and modern lives of the saint. Sometimes we find specific references to epidemic contexts, but, in most cases, they are galleries of more general miraculous actions. This is the case of the *Altarpiece of St Vincent Ferrer* by Miguel del Prado (fl. 1518-1537), made in the first third of the 16th century for the Dominican convent of San Onofre in Museros and now kept in the Museu de Belles Arts in Valencia. The piece was commissioned by the Dominican inquisitor Juan de Enguera for the family chapel of the Enguera family.³²

If we move forward in time to the 17th century, the images usually present the saint dressed as a Dominican with an open book in his left hand and making a preaching gesture with his raised right arm. This is the officially established view of him, completed with the introduction of a phylactery with the inscription “Timete Deum et date illi honorem quia venit hora iudicii eius”.³³ Within the mass of visual representations devoted to the saint, we find the propagation of Vincent’s image as an apocalyptic preacher, and this was maintained in the 17th and 18th centuries. Associated with other saints, he formed part of the strong devotional traditions of the Catholic saints’ calendar. The saint’s miracle-working function was maintained in the texts about him, but not so much in the preserved pictorial works. We can cite the examples of Urbano Fos (c. 1610-1658), who, in the first third of the 17th century, made the *St Vincent Ferrer* in the Museo Nacional del Prado, which formed part of the Royal Collections of Charles IV, or the two paintings by Alonso Cano (1601-1667) whose theme and title is the *Preaching of St Vincent Ferrer*, one in the Museu de Belles Arts in Valencia

31. Rona Goffen, *Giovanni Bellini*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989, pp. 274-277.

32. Francisco de Paula Momblanch y Gonzálbez, “El obispo inquisidor fray Juan Enguera y el retablo vicentino del ‘Maestro del Grifo’”, *Anales del Centro de Cultura Valenciana*, 51 (1966), pp. 89-123; Mercedes Gómez-Ferrer, “Miguel del Prado, pintor de retablos en Valencia. Su fallecimiento en las germanías (1521)”, *Archivo Español de Arte*, 90/358 (2017), pp. 125-140.

33. Text taken from the biblical passage: “Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come. Worship the one who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water” (Rev. 14.7).



Fig. 1. Andrea Procaccini, *St Vincent Ferrer* (second half of the 17th century), New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. © The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

and the other in the collection of the Fundación del Banco Santander in Madrid. Palomino, who stayed in Valencia in the months following the dramatic events of his wife's death, notes having seen a painting by Cano with the theme in the convent of San Francisco in Valencia.³⁴

Therefore, the prevailing iconography of Vincent links him with apocalyptic preaching and not with miracle-working (Fig. 1). We share the idea expressed by Boeckl on the iconography of the plague in Baroque art. The visual presence of the disease is reduced and the prominence of the sacraments is increased, with the final objective of presenting the good Catholic death, as we have observed with the iconography of St Vincent: "although Tridentine images depicted disease and dying, they exuded a sense of optimism. Their meaning was not death but promise of eternal life".³⁵

34. Alonso Cano. *Espiritualidad y modernidad artística*, ed. by María del Mar Villafranca Jiménez, Granada, Junta de Andalucía, Consejería de Cultura, 2001, pp. 85-86.

35. Christine M. Boeckl, *Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology*, Kirksville, Truman State University Press, 2000, p. 135. Concerning *decorum* and the

Fig. 2. Anonymous, *St Vincent Ferrer* (1898), London, Wellcome Collection. © Wellcome Collection.



In a way, after Trent, the legends created a popular veneer for a figure who officially became a Valencian saint and preacher of Christian faith and apocalyptic fear (Fig. 2). Texts present this protective character against disease more often than do visual creations. In Valdecebro's *vita* of 1682, he explicitly mentions the many cases of miraculous healing the saint performed and emphasises the spiritual need for healing after the ravages of the plague. This is his account of the case in Barcelona:

Picó la peste en Barcelona en este tiempo, y predicábales, que los azotes de Dios, eran el eco que se responde a las voces de las culpas de los hombres, que las conociesen; y que para suspender la mano airada de tan justo Juez, se hicieran Procesiones, Oraciones, y Penitencias públicas, que así cesaría la pestilencia; hicieron y cesó.³⁶

representation of *sores*, the author says: “Seventeenth-century painters ceased showing tantalizing, seminude victims of disease and they avoided the portrayal of disfiguring symptoms; hence Baroque paintings rarely displayed plague buboes” (*ibid.*, p. 109).

36. Ferrer de Valdecebro, *Historia de la vida*, p. 53.

Gavaldà's account of the presence of the plague in Valencia is similar. Plague in the 17th century was due to a lack of devotion, according to this extract from his *Memoria de los sucesos particulares de Valencia y su reino: en los años mil seiscientos quarenta y siete y quarenta y ocho tiempo de peste*:

En este año mil seiscientos cuarenta y siete entró la peste en Valencia, y no vino del Reino, sino de Argel. Como se pensó. No guardó nuestras puertas Vicente, quizá porque halló cerradas las de su devoción en nuestros corazones, que a estar estas abiertas nunca las de nuestra Ciudad se abrieran a la peste.³⁷

The same text describes the situation with a degree of realism that allows us to imagine the terror of contagion and death:

Entrado el mes de octubre era en Valencia el duelo y sentimiento universal, por ser tan grande la mortalidad, que no podían los cuerpos enterrarse a brazos de Sepultureros. Proveyó la Ciudad a las Parroquias de unos carros, los cuales iban recogiendo por las calles los cuerpos que por las ventanas descolgaban, envueltos algunos con una sábana, y otros aun sin esta. No se hallaba quien quisiera enterrarles, cuanto más amortajarles. Para este oficio, y para guiar los carros, se valió la Ciudad de algunos esclavos que compró: y no bastando esto, se ayudó de algunos encarcelados.³⁸

So, at the time of the catastrophe – at the time of the plague epidemic – devotion to St Vincent Ferrer was recovered in order to ward off the evil from society, and one of the causes sought for that evil was lack of faith. The popular type of devotion for St Vincent Ferrer did not follow the official pattern, except in the texts in times of epidemic. We can speak of the preservation of popular religiosity underlying the prevailing official line. Religious healing took on greater importance in the face of the plague, and the elements present in folk medicine reappeared and became more important when people needed relief. When the venerated figure was local, the power granted to him was increased by the direct connection, close relationship and emotional involvement with the community of the faithful.

We can therefore make another observation: in each locality, holy intercession before an epidemic was closely related to local devotion.

37. Francesc Gavaldà, *Memoria de los sucesos particulares de Valencia y su reino: en los años mil seiscientos cuarenta y siete y cuarenta y ocho, tiempo de peste*, Valencia, Silvestre Esparsa, 1651, p. 88.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

To go back to Gavaldà on the Valencian plague: “entiendo que debemos este favor a los Ilustrísimos Patronos de Valencia; los cuales desde el día que les escogimos por Tutelares, y dimos el Patronazgo por título de fidelidad, están obligados a defendernos y ampararnos”.³⁹ Thus, we can find devotion to St Roch in Barcelona from 1589, the year when the annual feast day of 16 August was celebrated for the first time in his honour for having preserved the inhabitants of the city from the plague; and the Neapolitan cult of St Gennaro, during the episode of 1526-1527 when the construction of the *Cappella del Tesoro* began, and also during the plague of 1656. One of the most popular images in which he is represented as an intercessor against the plague is the painting by Luca Giordano (1634-1705), *St Gennaro Interceding for the Plague Victims*, now in the Museo di Capodimonte, but originally from the church of Santa Maria del Pianto.

3. *The relevance of St Vincent Ferrer to outbreaks of plague: traditional festivals and diseases. From the cholera of 1854 to COVID-19*

So far, this article has demonstrated that there are two important aspects of the Valencian devotion to St Vincent Ferrer: on the one hand, the official model of the Dominican preacher saint, and, on the other, his miracle-working properties. This is reflected in the popular engravings produced continuously from the 18th century to the 20th centuries, and particularly in the joys or *goigs*, a type of religious print whose use was related to popular liturgies. This trend has remained unchanged to the present day, and this is evident in some practices that characterise popular devotion, including the celebration of the *Milacres of Sant Vicent Ferrer* or the festival that takes place on the *Nit de les Fogueretes* in Agullent. A particular feature of these manifestations of popular folklore is that they insistently evoke the saint's healing powers (Fig. 3).

The Miracles of St Vincent Ferrer, or *Milacres de Sant Vicent Ferrer* in Valencian, are children's theatrical performances that take place in the streets of Valencia on hand-made stages decorated with religious themes known as *Altars de Sant Vicent*. Different representations of the saint's miracles are performed on each of these. Cervera describes them as follows:

39. *Ibid.*, p. 88.



Fig. 3. *St Vincent Ferrer's miracle representation* (1975), Valencia. © Wikimedia Commons.

Tradicionalmente se vienen representando en las calles de Valencia unas obritas dramáticas denominadas por el pueblo y por sus autores milacres (milagros). Tales representaciones se celebran durante las fiestas patronales de San Vicente Ferrer y las piecillas siempre tienen como núcleo argumental algún milagro atribuido al Santo.⁴⁰

Among the miracles represented, in recent years the theme of curing epidemic diseases has enjoyed particular resonance. This has even stimulated literary works, such as the story by Manuel Sánchez Navarrete entitled *La pesta vençuda; milacre de Sant Vicent Ferrer en un acte i en vers* (1985).⁴¹ At the festival held on 16 April 2012, a thematic altar – the *Altar del Tossal* – based on this work won the *milacres* contest organised by the association Lo Rat Penat and which that year was themed precisely *La pesta vençuda* (Fig. 4):

40. Juan Cervera, *Los "milacres" vicentinos en las calles de Valencia*, Valencia, Del Cenia al Segura, 1983.

41. Manuel Sánchez Navarrete, *La pesta vençuda; milacre de Sant Vicent Ferrer en un acte i en vers*, Valencia, Editorial Altar de Sant Vicent Ferrer de la Plaça del Carme, 1985.



Fig. 4. *St Vincent Ferrer's miracle representation* (2018), Valencia. © Manolo Guallart.

La pieza cuenta el milagro que el santo realizó para librar a Valencia de una epidemia de peste. En una ciudad bajo el control de la Muerte y del Espíritu del Mal, los habitantes están más interesados en el amor que en mantener la fe. Cuando les azota una epidemia de peste, recurren al fraile Vicente Ferrer, que tras recordarles los diez mandamientos, libera a la ciudad de la plaga y se enfrenta con la Muerte y el Espíritu del Mal para alejarles de Valencia.⁴²

Meanwhile, *La Nit de les Fogueretes* in Agullent (Fig. 5) is a festival owing its origin to a miraculous episode. Tradition has it that on 4 September 1600 a miracle took place freeing the town of Agullent from the plague. One of the oldest documents that tells of these events comes from 1658 and is known as the *Decreto del Miracle*. It tells how, during the plague, the townspeople had sought refuge in the mountains and countryside. The caretaker of the sanctuary of Sant Vicent Ferrer, Joan Solves, did not even dare go down to the village, so he ran out of oil for

42. Álex Serrano, "El Tossal recrea la victoria sobre la peste", *Levante. El mercantil valenciano*, 17 April 2012, <https://www.levante-emv.com/valencia/2012/04/17/tossal-recrea-victoria- peste-12992560.html> (accessed 30 March 2021).



Fig. 5. *Nit de les Fogueretes*, Agullent. © Andrés Marín Jarque via Wikimedia Commons.

the saint's lamp. On the evening of 3 September, the caretaker heard a noise in the chapel. He went to see what it might be and saw the figure of a Dominican friar kneeling at the foot of the altar. He ran to tell his wife but, when he returned to the church, he saw no friar, even though the door was closed. Instead, the lamp was brimming with the oil and burning brightly. The caretaker ran to tell everyone about the great mystery. Everyone was cured by that light and the miraculous oil. The memory of that happy night was transformed over the years into a ritual: the *Nit de les Fogueretes*, which takes place every year on the first Friday in September.

Other demonstrations of the continuing relevance of the cult of St Vincent in the Valencian region can be found in the city of Valencia itself. Here, the traces of the saint are still present not only in the celebrations organised every year on his feast day, 5 April (although popularly his feast is celebrated on the Monday following the second Sunday of Easter), but also in the living memory of the patron saint through the statue in Plaza Tetúan and at his birthplace, where the *Pouet de Sant Vicent* is still preserved. On the pedestal of the statue, an inscription reads “Valencia agradecida a la protecció dispensada en la ciudad por San Vicente Ferrer el año MDCLXXVII” as a reminder of the first sculpture made

Fig. 6. Carlos José Cloostermans, *St Vincent Ferrer* (1677), Valencia, Tetuán Square. © Las Provincias.



in 1677, even if the current one is a piece by the sculptor Carlos José Cloostermans (1781-1836) from the 19th century. Originally, it was located at the Portal de San Vicente in the walls of Valencia in gratitude for the saint's special protection against plagues and other catastrophes. In 1960, after restoration, it was moved from the municipal warehouses where it had been kept to its present location near the saint's birthplace and the Convent of Santo Domingo (Fig. 6).

The saint's house, at number 1 Calle del Pouet de Sant Vicent, is preserved. The access to the site is decorated with 18th-century ceramics and elements from the 19th and 20th centuries. Among the ceramic panels is a reference that allows us to link the saint with miracle-working powers once again. In 1854, the well there provided water during the cholera epidemic, saving the citizens. This is set out at the site: "Para perpetua memoria / de la piedad de Valencia / durante la epidemia del cólera morbo / en 1854 suministró este pozo / 159.976 cántaros de agua / transportándose por ferrocarril 45.900 por gratitud colocó esta taza de mármol / la piedad de los valencianos / Año 1858". Today, the water continues to bring together the faithful seeking solace from illness. Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923) captured it in his painting *Ex voto*, from 1892, now in a private collection. In it,

the ceramic tiles are covered by items showing gratitude to the saint: the *ex votos*. The painting also shows us the tradition of going to bless children with water from the well, bringing us closer to the devotional anchors of the late 19th century.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, St Vincent Ferrer is once again present in the prayers of the faithful. We are now in a fully technological era based on scientific advances, but, even so, faith has a role in society. This is the placebo effect of religion: we are aware that science is the path to healing, but the heart can benefit from prayers and collective participation in rituals that publicly display the community's concerns. Religion means that we are not alone in the face of danger: others accompany us, and together we become stronger. The revival of faith in the face of the disease has led to a recovery of devotion just as the festivities dedicated to the saint were cancelled due to the terrifying increase in the spread of the disease. *Debemos encomendarnos a Sant Vicent Ferrer* is the title of the communiqué of 14 March 2020 from the Central Board of St Vincent, made by the Honourable Clavariesa of the 2020 Vincentian Festivities. It says:

En estos momentos de incertidumbre, encerrados en nuestras casas, acechados por el virus COVID-19, sufriendo miedo, temiendo por nuestros mayores y por los más vulnerables de la sociedad, sabiendo que muchas personas, y algunos de nuestros hermanos, atraviesan una forzada soledad. Un momento especialmente aciago para los que no tienen un hogar, o una familia, para los que están enfermos, para los más pobres y marginados de nuestra sociedad. Valencianos, hoy más que nunca, con fuerza, debemos pedir la intercesión de nuestro patrón, debemos encomendarnos a Sant Vicent Ferrer.⁴³

This was also expressed on 20 April 2020 by the Cardinal Archbishop of Valencia, Antonio Cañizares, during the Eucharist in the Cathedral on the feast day of the patron saint of the Valencian region. There are several articles in the newspaper archive on the connection with the saint during the COVID-19 period, and not only from the Hispanic sphere. In Brittany, the Dominican convent in Rennes, in cooperation with Vannes Cathedral, wrote a "Supplication to Saint Vincent Ferrer" ("Supplique à Saint Vicent Ferrier") in 2020. It reads: "Intercede, ô glorieux S. Vincent, pour que le

43. Inmaculada Atienza Peñarrocha, "Debemos encomendarnos a Sant Vicent Ferrer", *Junta Central Vicentina*, 2020 <http://www.juntacentralvicentina.org/index.php/224-debemos-encomendarnos-a-sant-vicent-ferrer> (accessed 30 March 2021).

peuple du diocèse de Vannes, de France et du monde entier soit libéré du fléau de l'épidémie du Covid-19".⁴⁴ Still today, people resort to religion in the face of an epidemic, and St Vincent Ferrer is still relevant in the collective imagination. Even the saint's prayer mentioned above has been recovered in the devotion of Benimámet and has been translated with absolute relevance into 21st-century language.⁴⁵

The angry and terrible God who sends the plague against mankind is a mental resource widely studied in historical research. In Agustín Rubio's contribution on Valencia in the 14th century, Françoise Hildesheimer's study of France during the Ancien Régime and the aforementioned research on Barcelona in the time of the Habsburgs by José Luis Betrán, as well as many other books and articles in the historiography of the subject, fear of the unknown is seen to lead human beings to take refuge in faith.⁴⁶ Going back to Gavaldà, in the 17th century, this idea is explained as follows:

La frecuencia de las Iglesias era mucha, y la de sacramentos, y confesiones generales grande. Procuraron las particulares Iglesias aplacar la ira a de Dios contra nuestros pecados con publicas rogativas. Hicieronse procesiones públicas por todas las Parroquias, y comunidades, buscando cada cual según su afecto y devoción el remedio en el Santo a quien mayor la tenía.⁴⁷

Seeking full indulgence for victims or encouraging rogations and almsgiving, together with the role of preaching, became common resources for treating the soul in times of plague. This image of a more poetic past is kept alive in a technified and hyperconnected era like our own. Sanctity remains a resource in the face of uncertainty.

The popular relevance of the saint in traditions and folklore shows us how well established the tradition has been locally, transcending historical periods and remaining close to the present. We have mentioned that the

44. "Edito et supplique à Saint Vincent Ferrier du 4 avril 2020", *Vannes Cathedral*, 2020, <https://www.cathedrale-vannes.fr/index.php/onglet-vie-paroissiale/-annonces/2872-edito-et-supplique-a-saint-vincent-ferrier> (accessed 30 March 2021).

45. Baltasar Bueno, "Benimámet rescata una oración compuesta por el propio san Vicente Ferrer contra las epidemias", *Levante. El mercantil valenciano*, 20 April 2020, <https://acortar.link/5MT71> (accessed 30 March 2021).

46. Agustín Rubio, *Peste negra. Crisis y comportamientos sociales en la España del siglo XIV. La ciudad de Valencia (1348-1401)*, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 1979; Françoise Hildesheimer, *La terreur et la pitié. L'Ancien Régime à l'épreuve de la peste*, Paris, Éditions Publisud, 1990; Betrán, *La peste en la Barcelona*.

47. Gavaldà, *Memoria de los sucesos*, p. 10.

water from St Vincent Ferrer's birthplace in Valencia continues to attract the faithful. However, it no longer comes from the old well. Instead, it is connected to the city's urban water supply. But the devotion maintains belief and the liquid retains its appeal to the faithful. In other words, religious healing and the efficacy of the placebo effect still have their power, fully continuing traditional religious conceptions of illness. In a newspaper article, we have the testimony of one of the devout women who came for water on the saint's feast day in 2013. Her resounding words close our text: "Lo de menos es el agua en sí. Lo más importante es la fe con la que nos la bebemos" ("The water itself is the least of it. The most important thing is the faith with which we drink").⁴⁸

48. Mónica Ros, "El agua milagrosa de la casa natalicia", *Levante. El mercantil valenciano*, 10 April 2013, <https://www.levante-emv.com/valencia/2013/04/10/agua-milagrosa-casa-natalicia-12905447.html> (accessed 30 March 2021).

RAMON DILLA MARTÍ

A Virgin from the Sea: The Mercedarians and the Cult of the Madonna di Bonaria, Protector of Seafarers*

The territorial expansion of the Crown of Aragon between the 14th and 15th centuries produced a great increase in navigation, generated by the need for connections via the Mediterranean between the trade centres on the Iberian coast and the major Italian ports, such as Genoa, Palermo, Naples and Cagliari. The result was a corresponding growth in the entire group of people engaged in maritime and port activities, namely, the seafaring and fishing communities.¹ Since the 1980s, many studies have explored this heterogeneous group, which was clearly stratified and specialised in all the different activities connected with commerce, the transport of goods and fishing, very often controlled by authentic dynasties made up of powerful interrelated families. Other characteristics included the constant mobility between ports and the adoption of a language featuring idiosyncratic and self-referential terminology that often went beyond the narrow professional circuit.² Among the many elements that bound this group together, this chapter addresses one of the most important: devotion.

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1. As noted by Airaldi, this includes sailors, merchants, fishermen and their families, in other words, nearly everyone who worked in contact with the sea. Gabriella Airaldi, “Marineros, etnias y sociedades en el Mediterráneo medieval. El caso de Génova”, in *El mundo mediterráneo de la Edad Media*, ed. by Blanca Garí, Barcelona, Nueva Historia, 1987, pp. 157-189: 166.

2. Maria Teresa Vinyoles i Vidal, “La vita quotidiana della gente di mare (Esempi barcellonesi dei secoli XIV e XV)”, *Medioevo. Saggi e Rassegne*, 21 (1997), pp. 9-35; José Enrique Ruiz Doménech, “El sueño de Ulises: la actividad marítima en la cultura mediterránea como un fenómeno de estructura”, in *Le genti del mare Mediterraneo*, ed. by Rosalba Ragosa, Naples, L. Pironti, 1981, pp. 253-287.

Studies by scholars such as Antonio Rumeu de Armas, Henri Bresc, Alberto Manodori, Magarita Gil and others have pointed out how the very hardships of maritime life, and the constant dangers of the sea in the form of strong winds and treacherous currents, led to a proliferation of cults devoted to protection against the most common marine disasters.³

In the case of cities with major ports, the range of patrons could be extremely large, comprising cults of local martyrs and religious figures and more widespread devotional traditions, such as that of San Telmo (St Elmo), to whom numerous seafaring confraternities in the Spanish-American world were dedicated.⁴ The promotion of the cult of the Blessed Virgin, which was fostered by ecclesiastical authorities in the Late Middle Ages throughout the Christian West, also had a clear influence on the piety of seafarers.⁵ This is confirmed by a variety of documentary evidence, such as the names of the ships that have come down to us, or the requests for masses and the legacies left in the wills of seafaring folk.⁶ In the artistic sphere, devotion also gave rise to a large number of sanctuaries scattered all along the Mediterranean coasts, often in places where miraculous events or apparitions of Our Lady had taken place.⁷ The local sites of worship were

3. Antonio Rumeu de Armas, *Historia de la previsión social en España: cofradías, gremios, hermandades, montepios*, Madrid, Editorial Revista de Derecho Privado, 1944, pp. 137-139; Adriano Coutinho Lanhoso, *Nossa Senhora protectora dos mareantes do velho burgo do Porto*, Porto, Empresa Industrial Gráfica do Porto, 1966; Henri Bresc, “La piété des gens de mer en Méditerranée occidentale aux derniers siècles du Moyen-Âge”, in *Le genti del mare Mediterraneo*, pp. 427-443: 428; *La preghiera del marinaio: la fede e il mare nei Segni della Chiesa e nelle tradizioni mariane*, ed. by Alberto Manodori, Genoa, Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato-Archivi di Stato, 1992; Marco Tangheroni, *Commercio e navigazione nel Medioevo*, Rome, Laterza, 1996; Margarita Gil Muñoz, *La vida religiosa de los mareantes: devociones y prácticas*, Madrid, Ministerio de Defensa-Instituto de Historia y Cultura Naval, 2004.

4. See Elisa María Jiménez Jiménez, *El Real Colegio Seminario de San Telmo de Sevilla, 1681-1808: su contribución al tráfico marítimo con América y su significado en la historia de la ciudad en el siglo XVIII*, Seville, Universidad de Sevilla, 2002.

5. Bresc, “La piété des gens de mer”, pp. 400-430.

6. For the specific case of Barcelona, see Núria Coll, Arcadi García Sanz, *Galeres mercants catalanes dels segles XIV-XV*, Barcelona, Fundació Noguera, 1994; Maria Elisa Varela, “Navegar y rezar. Devoción y piedad de las gentes de mar barcelonesas (siglos XIV-XV)”, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 29 (1999) pp. 1119-1132.

7. Giorgio Cracco, “La grande stagione dei santuari mariani (XIV-XVII secolo)”, in *I santuari cristiani d'Italia. Bilancio del censimento e proposte interpretative*, ed. by André Vauchez, Rome, École française de Rome, 2007, pp. 17-44: 24.

often positioned outside the walls, although not far from the cities. They were frequently run by religious orders and became important centres of pilgrimage. One of the most famous examples is that of the Madonna di Trapani, venerated in the Carmelite Basilica della Santissima Annunziata, whose cult was extraordinarily popular in the Late Middle Ages.⁸

The cult of Our Lady of the Rosary became firmly established in the early modern era following her intercession in favour of the Christian ships of the Holy League at the Battle of Lepanto (1571).⁹ Another cult that enjoyed even greater success and that is still vitally alive is that of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. She was instated as *Stella Maris*, Star of the Sea and patron of seafarers, following the approval of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary by Pope Sixtus V in the *Reddituri* bull of 11 July 1587. At the specific request of the Order of the Discalced Carmelites, the faithful who recited this litany were granted 200 days' indulgence.¹⁰

This article focuses on one of the Marian cults that enjoyed vast popularity among seafarers in the early modern period: the Madonna di Bonaria, known in Spanish as “Virgen del Buen Aire” or “de los Buenos Aires”, namely Our Lady of the Good Air, or of the Fair Winds. The location of the sanctuary on a small hill known as the *Castell de Bonayre* was a strategic position for occupation by the Aragonese troops that were set on conquering Cagliari in 1324.¹¹ Thanks to exhaustive documentary research carried out by Mercè Costa, we know that in April 1325 the

8. The cult was exported beyond Sicily throughout the Mediterranean and along the Atlantic coasts to places such as Tenerife, Seville, Orense, Marseilles and La Goulette or Tunis, to name but a few. The marble statue, attributed to Nino Pisano, is traditionally believed to have originated from Syria and to have reached the city in 1290 when the ship carrying it and its owner, a Knight Templar from Pisa, was forced by a storm to take refuge in Trapani. Upon landing, he decided to donate the statue to the city senate as an *ex voto*. On the cult of the Madonna di Trapani, see Gabriele Monaco, *Notizie storiche della basilica santuario della Madonna di Trapani: lo scritto è arricchito dallo studio della dott.ssa Maria Pia Sibilia Cosentino sulla statua della Madonna*, Trapani, Radio, 1950; Vincenzo Scuderi, *La Madonna di Trapani e il suo Santuario*, Trapani, Edizioni del Santuario della Madonna di Trapani, 2011.

9. Among the numerous studies dedicated to the cult and iconography of Our Lady of the Rosary and her intercession in the Battle of Lepanto, see Eugenio Bruno, *Il Rosario della gloriosa Vergine: iconografia e iconologia mariana in Terra d'Otranto (secc. XV-XVIII)*, Lecce, Edizioni Grifo, 2016.

10. Gino Alberto Faccioli, “Il titolo Stella maris e i santuari”, in *I santuari e il mare*, ed. by Immacolata Aulisa, Bari, Edipuglia, 2014, pp. 207-214.

11. Francesco Cesare Casula, *La storia di Sardegna*, Cagliari, Delfino, 1994, p. 303.

Infante Alfonso – future King Alfonso IV – had a small parish church built in this area even before the definitive surrender of the city, which took place almost a year later.¹²

As is known, the conquest of Cagliari by the Counts of Barcelona ushered in a lengthy period of war and conflict that continued on the island of Sardinia for over a century, ending only with the battle of Sanluri, in which the army of the Judicate of Arborea was defeated. In parallel with the military victories, throughout the 15th century the new Aragon oligarchy implemented a policy of repopulation of the city centres. This also involved the importation of cults from Catalonia, materialising in the creation of places of worship dedicated, for instance, to St Eulalia, St James and Our Lady of Monserrat.¹³ At the same time, new religious orders also arrived, such as that of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy, the Mercedarians, traditionally held to have been established in Barcelona in 1218.¹⁴

On 15 June 1336, King Peter IV donated the church of Bonaria to Berenguer Cantull, who was Master General of the Mercedarians at the time. Nevertheless, as a result of the 14th-century wars and the lengthy jurisdictional conflicts between the friars and the archbishops of Cagliari, the order took permanent possession of the building only in 1401, when the

12. Maria Mercè Costa i Paretas, *El Santuari de Santa Maria de Bonaire a la ciutat de Caller*, Cagliari, Ettore Gasperini Editore, 1973, pp. 9-13. Costa's research clarifies certain information already suggested in earlier studies, including those of Efisio Lippi and Francesco Sulis: Efisio Lippi, *La madre di dio e la Sardegna. Storia del Santuario de N.S. di Bonaria*, Cagliari, Tip. Timon, 1870; Francesco Sulis, *Notizie storiche del Santuario di N.S. di Bonaria in Cagliari*, Cagliari, Tipografia San Giuseppe, 1935. On the architectural characteristics of the sanctuary of Bonaria, see Renata Serra, "Il santuario di Bonaria in Cagliari e gli inizi del gotico catalano in Sardegna. Parte II", *Studi Sardi*, 14-15 (1957), pp. 333-354.

13. Maria Giuseppina Meloni, "Culto dei santi e devozione mariana nella Sardegna catalana: il Santuario di Bonaria a Cagliari tra fede e identità", in *Sardegna catalana*, ed. by Anna Maria Oliva and Olivetta Schena, Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2014, pp. 210-227. On religious practices in Sardinia in the Aragonese period, see also Raimondo Turtas, *Storia della Chiesa in Sardegna dalle origini al 2000*, Rome, Città Nuova, 1999, pp. 292-295.

14. Within the abundant Mercedarian historiography, see the recent monograph *800 años de Huella Mercedaria. Un repaso a la Historia de la Orden de la Merced*, Madrid, Letrame Editorial-Provincia de Aragón de la Orden de la Merced, 2020. For a meticulous synthesis, see also Stephano Defraia, "Redemptionum Ordinis de Mercede opera omnia: riflessione e percorsi", in *Relazioni religiose nel Mediterraneo. Schiavi, redentori, mediatori (secc. XVI-XIX)*, ed. by Sara Cabibbo and Maria Lupi, Rome, Viella, 2012, pp. 37-64.

then King of Aragon, Martin the Humane, placed both the church and the adjacent convent under special royal protection.¹⁵

As Giuseppina Meloni has already noted, the success of this cult should not be considered merely the result of royal volition or the skill of the Mercedarian friars; it emerged, rather, from the effective protection of seafarers. A city such as Cagliari, oriented towards the sea with a conspicuous part of its economy and society engaged with the activities of the port, inevitably sought all possible protection – especially celestial – against the dangers of navigation.¹⁶ This is easy to see even now, considering the position of the sanctuary of Bonaria standing out against the backdrop of the city and appearing to welcome all those arriving from the sea.¹⁷ It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that one of the first written references to this devotion in Cagliari is the occurrence of *Madonna di Bonaria* as the name of a galleon, recorded in a notarial document of 1454.¹⁸

The end of the Sardinian-Aragonese hostilities enabled an economic upturn, linking Cagliari with the most important Spanish ports and some of the main Mediterranean trade routes. In the second half of the 15th and the early 16th century, the increase in maritime trade was matched by an increase in the recourse to celestial mediation by seafarers. Beyond the traditional risks caused by weather conditions, they now also had to address a major new danger in the form of Barbary pirates, to whom we shall return.

All these factors contributed to the consolidation of the sanctuary of Bonaria as a religious centre of primary status on the island of Sardinia, and above all as an important site of pilgrimage. This period of splendour also had a crucial artistic consequence in the acquisition of a new image of Our Lady as an object of worship. In the church of Bonaria, there is a 14th-century sculpture known as the “Madonna del Miracolo” portraying the Virgin Mary holding the seated Christ Child, a work of small size and modest workmanship.¹⁹ It seems plausible that the Mercedarians decided to replace the titular image with one of greater importance and figurative

19. According to the first Mercedarian chronicles, the name derives from the miracle connected with the statue when blood flowed from its neck after it was stabbed by a soldier venting his anger after losing at cards. Antiocho Brondo, *Historia y milagros de Nuestra Señora de Buenayre de la Ciudad de Caller de la Isla de Cerdeña, de la Orden de nuestra Señora de la Merced, Redemption de captivos cristianos*, Cagliari, Galcerino Giovanni Maria, 1595, p. 5.

quality, conceived to be venerated from above.²⁰ The new statue of the Madonna di Bonaria definitely contributed to the expansion and propagation of the cult, associated with an ever-increasing number of miracles attributed to her intercession. The prestige and popularity of the sanctuary continued to grow over the 16th century, partly due to the support of the archbishops of Cagliari. Antonio Parragues de Castillejo (1559-1568), for instance, introduced the tradition whereby every new bishop visited the monastery upon his arrival in the city. He also promoted the confraternity of the Madonna di Bonaria which, although it had been established in the Mercedarian convent at the end of the 15th century, was greatly developed in the second half of the following century and succeeded in obtaining significant indulgences from Pope Clement VIII in 1602.²¹

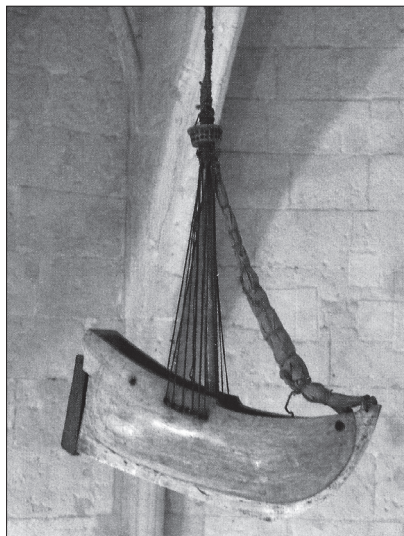
Significant action was also taken by Archbishop Francisco del Val (1587-1595), who, at the request of Mercedarian prior Antioco Brondo, in 1592 launched a canonisation process: an inquiry to gather information regarding the cult and the numerous miracles attributed to the Marian image.²² The aim was to achieve official recognition of the antiquity of devotion towards the Madonna di Bonaria in her sanctuary, endorsed by the archbishop, through the systematic collection of numerous testimonies. The documents have been studied in depth by Giuseppina Meloni and

20. Scholars are agreed on dating this new statue to the last quarter of the 15th century, although various names have been proposed for the artist: Raffaello Causa, “Contributi alla conoscenza della scultura del ‘400 a Napoli”, in *Sculture lignee della Campania*, exhibition catalogue, ed. by Ferdinando Bologna and Raffaello Causa, Naples, stab. Tip. Giuseppe Montanino, 1950, pp. 105-150; Maria Grazia Scano, “Percorsi della scultura lignea in estofado de oro dal tardo Quattrocento alla fine del Seicento in Sardegna”, in *Estofado de oro. La statuaria lignea nella Sardegna spagnola*, Cagliari, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, 2001, pp. 21-55. On the question of attribution and the image of the statue, see the chapter by Sara Caredda in this volume.

21. Maria Giuseppina Meloni, “Ordini religiosi e santuari mariani. I mercedari e il culto per Nostra Signora di Bonaria a Cagliari tra Quattro e Cinquecento”, in *Culti, santuari, pellegrinaggi in Sardegna e nella Penisola Iberica tra Medioevo ed età contemporanea*, ed. by Olivetta Schena, Cagliari-Genova-Turin, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche-Istituto di Storia dell’Europa Mediterranea, 2006, pp. 339-369: 361-362.

22. As noted by Giuseppina Meloni, the inquiry can be contextualised in the period of the application of the doctrines issued by the Council of Trent – and hence the need for ecclesiastical hierarchies to control local cults – and also against the background of the rivalry between the archbishops of Cagliari and Sassari, vying for primacy in Sardinia. Maria Giuseppina Meloni, *Il Santuario della Madonna di Bonaria. Origini e diffusione di un culto*, Rome, Viella, 2011, p. 221.

Fig. 1. Small boat made of ivory. Cagliari, Sanctuary of Madonna di Bonaria. © Archivio Ilisso.



were brought together in an account of over 200 miracles, testified before a notary by the sworn statements of 25 witnesses, and also through the detailed descriptions of the *ex votos* illustrating how the majority of the miracles were closely linked to the perils of the sea.²³

Particularly important among these *ex votos* is the small boat made of ivory that is still conserved in the sanctuary, which was capable of signalling the direction of the winds by imperceptible movements of the bow, so that the sailors could be warned before taking to sea (Fig. 1). Most importantly, the witnesses referred to the existence of a vast number of helms, cables and small models of ships donated by the seafarers in thanks for graces received. These particular objects have unfortunately not survived, but we can gather an idea of their appearance from similar objects – albeit more recent, mostly 19th-century – that can still be seen in a museum set up to display them in the sanctuary.

The canonisation process of 1592 describes, among the *ex votos*, a large number of small paintings showing scenes of miracles, most of them referring to marine disasters, often illustrated in great detail. For

23. Roberto Porrà, “Il santuario di Bonaria (Cagliari), avamposto della cristianità nel secolare conflitto con i corsari barbareschi”, in *Culti, santuari, pellegrinaggi*, pp. 503-534.

instance, one of these pictures figures was, “Ítem un altre retaule [...] se veu una nau ab XXIII galeres turquesques combaten-la, y dalt de tot la dita imapie e Nostra Señora de Bonayre y Jesuset [...]”.²⁴ This brief account, written in Catalan, like most of the process, evokes the image of a Christian ship attacked by 23 Turkish galleons and miraculously saved by the intercession of the Madonna di Bonaria, who appears in the upper part of the composition holding the Christ Child, as in the Cagliari statue. There were many such pictures illustrating attacks by corsairs and Barbary pirates, who terrorised mariners in the second half of the 16th century, threatening to kill them or to take them prisoner and transport them to the big African ports, such as Tunis or Algiers, where they would be freed only on payment of a hypothetical ransom.²⁵

Roberto Porrà has studied the miracles of the Madonna di Bonaria in depth, based on the process opened in 1592 and, above all, on the work written by the Mercedarian, Antioco Brondo, that was published in Cagliari three years later.²⁶ He cites up to thirty-three episodes featuring the prodigious protection of Christians in the face of Barbary attacks. Nineteen of these were attacks at sea by Turkish vessels, all of which took place between the second decade of the 16th century and a few months before the publication of the book in November 1595. This gives an idea of the gravity of the problem and its profound impact on those along the trade routes.²⁷

Our Lady's miraculous protection often took the form of an unexpected change in the wind, which filled the sails of the Christian ships in the nick of time, allowing them to escape the pirates' evil plans. The numerous examples include the episode that involved the ship of Francesco Stalla from Genoa, which, on 24 June 1545, ran up against the entire Ottoman

24. Meloni, *Il Santuario*, p. 114.

25. This was a very serious hazard for the Sardinian coasts, where numerous raids took place: at Quartu (1578), Pirri, Quartucciu and again Quartu (1582). There were also attacks on Christian sanctuaries, such as the Basilica di San Gavino in Porto Torres (1627) and, again as testified by Father Antioco Brondo, the dual attempt to sack the sanctuary of Bonaria itself, miraculously foiled by Our Lady. Salvatore Bono, *I corsari barbareschi*, Turin, ERI, 1964, pp. 167-168; Francesco Loddo Canepa, *La Sardegna dal 1478 al 1793*, Sassari, Edizioni Gallizzi, 1986, pp. 90-92; Antonello Mattone, “La Sardegna nel mondo Mediterraneo”, in *Storia dei Sardi e della Sardegna. L'Età moderna dagli aragonesi alla fine del dominio spagnolo*, ed. by Massimo Guidetti, Cagliari, Jaca Book, 1988, pp. 12-64.

26. Brondo, *Historia y milagros*.

27. Porrà, “Il santuario di Bonaria”.

fleet of more than eighty ships close to the island of Ponza. Thanks to the devout prayer of the sailors, who swiftly dumped most of the cargo into the sea, the lighter and faster ship was able to rapidly reach a safe harbour.²⁸ The narration of these events often corresponds to the descriptions of the *ex votos*. For instance, there is the episode of the galley belonging to Gabriel Berno and the Araix brothers who, on 6 September 1530, were sailing from Cagliari to Alassio when, just in front of the port of Alghero, they were threatened by no less than thirteen vessels under the command of the famous corsair Khayr al-Din, better known as Barbarossa.²⁹

Nevertheless, the seafarers' supplications were not all prayers for deliverance from the pirates. The natural disasters that occurred at sea were also often the cause of miracles. A very clear example is what took place in the Gulf of Lyons in 1572:

MDLXXII, a li 10 di ginaro, partendosi la nave dil capitano Jouane de Nicolò, reguseo, di Alicante per andar a Venetia, trobandose en el golfo de Lione ne sopravinè una grandissima fortuna di maestrali, al quale ne durò quatro jorni et quatro noti et rompimo il timone e si perdetè la barca, e navigamo dui jorni e dui note senza esso timone e sempre invocamo il nostro ajuto la gloriosa vergine Maria de Bonayra, la quale per sua imensa bondà noi conduse miraculosamente in questo presente porto a salvamento.³⁰

The quotation refers to a ship sailing from Alicante to Venice that was overtaken by a mistral gale. The witness relates that the helm was broken, leaving the ship completely adrift for four days and four nights, but that, thanks to the intercession of Our Lady, it was able to reach safe harbour. The episode is interesting because it shows that the miracles of the Madonna di Bonaria were not restricted to the waters of Sardinia but ranged over a broad, international marine area that encompassed Catalan, Castilian, Sicilian, Genoese, Basque and other seafarers. Here, the description refers to the mistral, the dominant wind in the Gulf of Lyons, but other examples refer to the gregale or the levant winds, depending on the specific geographical area.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 522. This case is also recorded in one of the *ex votos* of the process: Meloni, *Il Santuario*, p. 116.

29. The inscription accompanying the picture reads: "Partí del port de Càller lo galió de Gabriel Berno y dels germans de Araix, e trobant-se sobre l'Alguer cinquanta millas, isqueren tretze fustas de Barbarossa y tots reclamant a la Verge Maria de Bonayre, son escapats. Fonch a 6 de septiembre en l'any 1530". Meloni, *Il Santuario*, p. 113.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 119.

In the vivid descriptions of disasters at sea in the *ex votos*, the breakage of various essential parts of the vessels is frequently shown as one of the most common risks:

Ítem, altre retaule molt vell en lo qual hi à una nau, y Dalt la imagie predita de Nostra Señora ab lo Iesuset y per ésser fet molt de temps nos poden llegir bé tots les lletres, sols les següents: “Aquesta es la nau de misser Roco Tomaso di Stefano regoseu, que al primer de desembre [1553], lo divendres dos hores ans de die, trobant-se en lo golf de Lleó li prengué una gran gropada de temps mestrals que li llevà lo trinquet de proa ab lo bouprès y trinquet de gàbia, qual estingueren dos [...] travessats per la mar qual llensaren moltes robes, y lo dit capità y gent, vent-se ja perduts, reclamaren a Nostra Señora de Bonayra lis [...] bon temps y aportar-los a terra de christians y axi ribaren a la present ciutat de Càller.³¹

As usual, the image is dominated by an angry sea with howling winds and gigantic waves that threaten the stability of the ship and eloquently convey the most frequent disasters: for instance, the breaking of the mast, or sailors or passengers – most of whom could not swim – falling into the sea. All those who were miraculously saved by the Madonna di Bonaria devoutly offered their *ex votos* to the sanctuary.

1. *The print of the Madonna di Bonaria (1595)*

In 1595, once the canonisation process was completed, Antioco Brondo, prior of the convent of Bonaria, published his *Historia y milagros de Nuestra Señora de Buenayre de la Ciudad de Callar*. The aim of this work was, on the one hand, to endorse the validity of the cult *ab antiquo tempore* and, on the other, to proclaim the efficacious intercession of the Marian image and to divulge its miracles.³² For the same purpose, the Cagliari Mercedarians also commissioned the production in Rome of a large-scale engraving surrounded by numerous scenes identified in the respective titles set beneath them (Fig. 2).

Maria Grazia Scano has studied this work and has identified Father Ferdinando de Sylva as *inventor* and attributed the plate to the Flemish

31. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

32. On Brondo, see Antonio Rubino, *I mercedari in Sardegna (1355-2000)*, Rome, Istituto storico dell'ordine della mercede, 2000, pp. 332-333.



Fig 2. Marten van Valckenborch III (engraver); Ferdinando de Sylva (inventor), *The Virgin of Bonaria Between Saints Cecilia and Eulalia*, 1595, burin engraving on copper, Cagliari, private collection. © Archivio Ilisso.

burin engraver Marten van Valckenborch III. The image of the Madonna di Bonaria is set in the centre, with, on one side, St Eulalia, patron saint of Barcelona – recalling the city where the Mercedarian Order was founded – and, on the other side, St Cecilia, patron of the Cathedral of Cagliari.³³ The figure of St Cecilia indicates the important support offered to the cult by the archdiocese of Cagliari, presided over by Archbishop Francisco del Val, who died in that same year. Effectively, a work of this size, quality and features – printed in Rome, to boot – could scarcely be unaffected by the ecclesiastical situation of Sardinia at the time and the dispute between the archbishops of Cagliari and Sassari for the title of Primate of Sardinia and Corsica. The hostilities came to a head in 1588 when the Bishop of Sassari, Alfonso de Lorca, applied officially to Pope Sixtus V requesting that he prohibit Francesco del Val from using this title. In 1609, in the name of the Spanish Crown, King Philip III decided to champion the case for Cagliari before Pope Paul V, but, instead of being settled, the question persisted throughout the 17th century and beyond. The main contenders in the dispute – the archdioceses of Cagliari and Sassari – sought to uphold their rights by producing evidence from the sources to demonstrate their greater antiquity and prestige and, above all, by fostering the publication of apologetic writings extolling the praiseworthy lives and miracles of their respective saints and Madonnas. Significant excavation operations were even carried out in the oldest cemeteries in search of the bodies of local martyrs to swell the ranks of the respective liturgical pantheons.³⁴

This was the backdrop to the appearance of the large engraving of the Madonna di Bonaria, ready to plead the cause of the Archdiocese of Cagliari against the aspirations of Sassari, and also perfectly aligned

33. Maria Grazia Scano, “La pittura del Seicento”, in *La società sarda in età spagnola*, ed. by Francesco Manconi, 2 vols, vol. II, Quart, Musumeci, 1993, pp. 124-153: 125-127; Maria Grazia Scano, “La città e dintorni di Cagliari nell’arte sacra”, in *Cagliari: l’immagine della città nella cartografia, nelle vedute e nell’arte sacra dal 16 al 19 secolo*, ed. by Rita Pamela Ladogana, Nuoro, Ilisso, 2020, pp. 291-324: 293-294.

34. *Sancti innumerabiles. Scavi nella Cagliari del Seicento: testimonianze e verifiche*, ed. by Donatella Mureddu, Donatella Salvi and Grete Stefani, Oristano, S’Alvure, 1988; Luciano Marrocu, “L’invención de los cuerpos santos”, in *La società sarda in età spagnola*, ed. by Francesco Manconi, 2 vols, vol. I, Quart, Musumeci, 1992, pp. 156-166; Antiocho Piseddu, *L’arcivescovo Francisco Desquível e la ricerca delle reliquie dei martiri cagliaritari nel secolo XVII*, Cagliari, Della Torre, 1997; Turtas, *Storia della Chiesa*, pp. 374-382; Mauro Dadea, “Gli scavi seicenteschi alla ricerca dei cuerpos santos”, in *Chiese e arte sacra in Sardegna. Arcidiocesi di Cagliari. Tomo I*, Sestu, Zonza, 2000, pp. 75-78.

with the sainthood policy of the Mercedarian friars. This latter detail has to be borne in mind for a correct interpretation of the upper section of the engraving, featuring an authentic line-up of religious belonging to the order – all complete with halos – along with the main *viris illustribus*, namely martyrs and Mercedarians who died in the odour of sanctity. On the left, opening the gallery, we can see St Serapion of Algiers and Blessed Mary de Cervellione, followed by the founder of the order, St Peter Nolasco, and then by St Raymond Nonnatus, the Blessed Leonardo, St Raymond Martyr, the Blessed Gilaberto (as founder of the hospital of Valencia), the Blessed Masters General Lorenzo Company and Antonio Caxal, the Blessed Pietro Malasanch, ending on the right with the Blessed Collagia and St Pedro Armengol.

It should be stressed that, although these figures were presented as saints and blessed ones, none had yet been officially recognised as such by Rome. Indeed, in 1595 the Mercedarian Order did not have a single officially canonised saint, although there were canonisation processes open, such as that of Peter Nolasco, who was finally canonised in 1628, followed in 1657 by Raymond Nonnatus, in 1675 by Pedro Pascual, in 1688 by Pedro Armengol, in 1692 by Saint Mary de Cervellione, and in 1728 by St Serapion. In the presentation of all possible candidates, this gallery of figures is thus clearly a declaration of the Mercedarians' intentions, and more specifically aspirations, regarding sainthood. At around the same time, the religious of the order and their representatives were putting pressure on the Vatican to officially open the canonisation processes, and the first biographies of these celestial heroes began to appear in print. This makes it of vital importance to link the engraving in question with the *Breve Historia de la Orden de Nuestra Señora de la Merced* by Father Felipe Guimeran, which had been published in Valencia just four years earlier.³⁵ This work traced the history of the Mercedarian Order from its foundation, including a great deal of biographical information and the lives of the most illustrious members. Comprised among these were the lives of all the religious featured in the engraving, which thus became a powerful tool for claiming the recognition of Mercedarian martyrs and saints. Set in

35. Felipe Guimeran, *Breve historia de la Orden de Nuestra Señora de la Merced de Redempcion de cautiuos christianos y de algunos santos y personas illustres della*, Valencia, en casa de los herederos de Iuan Nauarro, 1591. A few years later Guimeran also became Master General of the order (1609-1616).

the centre of the print, the Madonna di Bonaria was visually aligned with the policy and aspirations of the friars.

In the row beneath the saints, the images at left and right show the figures in prayer of the two sovereigns who were the chief benefactors of the sanctuary of Bonaria: King Alfonso IV, who ordered the construction of the original church, and King Peter IV, who granted it to the Mercedarian friars in 1336. Continuing down the left-hand side of the engraving is a narrative sequence consisting of four scenes related to the foundation of the order: the appearance of Our Lady to Peter Nolasco, King James I and St Raymond of Penyafort on 1 August 1218 and the exhortation to establish a new order dedicated to the redemption of captives; the constitution of the new religious order in the Cathedral of Barcelona ten days later; and the official recognition granted through the bull of Pope Gregory IX in 1230. The narration follows the account contained in the first Mercedarian chronicles, such as the *Speculum fratrum* by Nadal Gaver (1445)³⁶ and the *Opusculum tantum quinque* by Pedro Cijar (1446),³⁷ later taken up again in the *Regula et constitutionis* of Gaspar de Torres (1565)³⁸ and the *Vitis Patrum* by Francisco Zumel (1588).³⁹

The cycle continues with three images illustrating the charismatic mission of the new order: the redemption of captives. In the first picture, we can see a ship setting sail for the lands of the infidels to ransom the captives who have fallen into the hands of the Ottomans.⁴⁰ The next picture shows the moment of liberation, with the friars negotiating the ransom price for the prisoners. Here, we should also recall the so-called fourth vow that the members of the Mercedarian Order were required to profess, whereby if they were unable to collect the sum required for redemption, they could exchange their own lives for those of the prisoners.⁴¹ In the

36. Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, Mercè, Còdex II. Nadal Gaver. *Speculum fratrum Ordinis beatissime Dei Genitricis de Mercede Redemptionis Captivorum*. Manoscritto, ff. 10-13.

37. Pedro Cijar, *Opusculum tantum quinque*, Barcelona, 1491.

38. Gaspar de Torres, *Regula et constitutionis sacri ordinis beatae Mariae de Mercede redemptoris captivorum*, Salamanca, excudebat Mathias Gastius, 1565.

39. Francisco Zumel, *De vitis Patrum et Magistrorum Generalium*, Salamanca, Cornelius Bonardus excudebat, 1588, pp. 12-17.

40. James W. Brodman, *L'orde de la Mercè. El rescat de captius a l'Espanya de les croades*, Barcelona, Quaderns Crema, 1990; Bruce Taylor, *Structures of Reform: The Mercedarian Order in the Spanish Golden Age*, Leiden-Boston-Köln, Brill, 2000.

41. Ignacio Vidondo, *El Espejo católico de la caridad divina y christiana con los cautivos de su pueblo en que se ve el sagrado instituto del Real y Militar Orden de Nuestra*

third picture, the mission has been accomplished, and we can see a long procession taking the freed captives home.

Having illustrated the origins and aims of the Mercedarians, the cycle then moves in a new direction with ten scenes portraying the arrival of the statue of the Madonna di Bonaria in the namesake sanctuary. The narration follows the account contained in Brondo's work, as well as the chronicle of the Mercedarian father, Felipe Guimeran.⁴² The various episodes illustrate in the greatest detail how, on 24 April 1370, a ship coming from Spain was struck by a violent storm just off of Sardinia. To avoid shipwreck, the captain decided to throw the entire cargo into the sea and the passengers began to offer up heartfelt prayers to Our Lady to save them from what seemed like certain death. Strangely, the last crate heaved over the side did not sink but began to ride the waves and, at its passage, the sky opened and the storm ceased. The sailors directed the course of the ship to follow the crate until it arrived at the port of Cagliari, where it ran aground on the beach in front of the church of the Mercedarians. Despite the large crowd that soon gathered, no one was able to move the crate until a boy summoned two Mercedarian friars, who miraculously managed to transport it with no effort to their convent. When the crate was opened, it was found to contain a statue of the Virgin and Child, the Virgin holding a lighted candle in her hand. As shown in the last scene in this part of the cycle, no sooner was the statue placed in the church than it began to perform miracles and rapidly attract numerous pilgrims.⁴³

The last section of the visual narration, on the right of the engraving, consists of images of the most important miracles attributed to the Madonna

Señora de la Merced, de la Redención de cautivos cristianos, Pamplona, Gaspar Martínez, 1658, pp. 227-228.

42. Guimeran, *Breue historia de la Orden*, p. 60.

43. The description of the scenes is detailed in the cartouche at the top centre of the engraving: "Haec est vera immago Sanctissimae Virginis / Mariae de Bonaero: quae eodem in Zenobio Civitatis Callaris Sardiniae Insulae usque in hodiernum diem miraculose posita cum quadam navicula quora(m) collocata sua puppi ventoru(m) varietatem demonstrante unde omnia Christianorum / genera per universum terrarum orbem miris miraculis eam invocantia ubi(que) terrar(um) exaudiuntur. Effigies haec quadam / in arca ad istar saranae colligata atq(ue) sigillo signata inventa e(t) circum quam o(mn)es in super redentor(um) ordinis Mercedis origo / apparet unaq(ue) et o(m)nim eiusd \ e(m) ordinem martirum orbis designat. Miraculo(um) signa q(ue) eiusdem imaginis demonstrantur situs at \ que locus termin(us) et Ecclesiae eiusd(em) Zenobis ubi hodie per eosde(m) fr(atr)es ord(inis) Redemptoru(m) habent anno 1336 hucusque".



Fig 3. Marten van Valckenborch III (engraver); Ferdinando de Sylva (inventor), The Virgin of Bonaria assisting the sailors, detail, 1595, burin engraving on copper, Cagliari, private collection. © Archivio Ilisso.

di Bonaria. Here, we can distinguish various prodigies of a thaumaturgical nature, such as the healing of the sick, the resurrection of the dying, the protection of mothers in childbirth, the restoration of sight to the blind and the curing of lepers. There are also images more closely related to the specific activity of the Mercedarians, such as the support of those condemned to death and the liberation of captives, which was the order's chief mission. The last part of the cycle in particular features episodes more closely related to the protection of seafarers, for instance the healing of those who had been attacked with daggers and arrows, which were common acts of violence in naval battles and in the frequent attacks by corsairs and Barbary pirates. The close link with the sea is particularly evident in the last scene, at upper right, with the underlying caption "*Deinde Navigantib. hac virgo Beata succurrit*". Here, we can see two large galleys and a small boat with two passengers being blessed by the image of the Madonna di Bonaria and the Child Jesus amidst the clouds (Fig. 3).

The image of the Madonna di Bonaria in the centre of the engraving follows the classic iconography of Our Lady of Mercy, dressed in the Mercedarian habit, with her mantle being held up by two cherubs.⁴⁴ Our

44. It should be noted that the representation of the Madonna di Bonaria in the engraving is not identical to the Cagliari statue, as explained in the chapter by Sara Caredda in this volume.

Lady is shown holding the Christ Child, who in turn bears the terrestrial orb in his hand as *Redemptor mundi*, while she holds in her right hand the mystic rose, and not the candle with boat, which is her more authentic attribute. This iconographic choice is probably due to the Mercedarians, who in this Roman engraving presented one of the first narrative cycles promoted by the order. As suggested by Vicent Zuriaga, the first representations of Our Lady of Mercy were made following the iconography of *Misericordia*, or Mercy, which enjoyed great popularity throughout the 17th and 18th centuries.⁴⁵ Remaining within Sardinia, for instance, it can be found in the painting by Giacomo Altomonte of the *Virgin of Mercy and the Saints of the Order* that presides over the chapel in the Cathedral of Cagliari commissioned by Archbishop Bernardo de Cariñena (1699-1722).⁴⁶ It seems likely that the Mercedarians themselves provided the Roman engraver with a print to serve as a model for this image of the Madonna di Bonaria, hence following the Marian iconography most widespread within the order. Further, this is an image that emphasises a maternal vision of Mary, who spreads out her mantle to shelter all the prisoners, the poor and the abandoned, making it particularly well-suited to exportation. The Mercedarians were in fact one of the orders called on to evangelise the New World, and they founded numerous convents in the Americas throughout the 16th and 17th centuries.⁴⁷ This was why the friars commissioned the creation of many engravings, conceived as a means for exporting devotions and iconographies. In this case, however, the scene appears to be aimed primarily at the faithful, who were invited to visit the sanctuary in Cagliari.

Everything points to the fact that this print was not conceived merely to promote the cult among the faithful of Sardinia – who already knew the

45. Vicent Francesc Zuriaga Senent, *La imagen devocional en la Orden de Nuestra Señora de la Merced: tradición, formación, continuidad y variantes*, València, Universitat de València, Servei de Publicacions, 2005.

46. Sara Caredda, “La actuación artística de los obispos y del cabildo en la catedral de Cagliari: el caso de la capilla de la Merced”, in *Echanges artistiques dans la couronne d’Aragon (XVI^e-XVIII^e siècles): le rôle des chapitres cathédraux*, ed. by Julien Lugand, Perpignan, Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2014, pp. 151-166; Sara Caredda, “Prelados viajeros y transferencias devocionales. El arzobispo de Cagliari Bernardo de Cariñena (1699-1722) y el culto a la Virgen de la Merced”, *Manuscrits. Revista d’història moderna*, 41 (2020), pp. 117-144.

47. Guillermo Vázquez, *La Orden de la Merced en Hispanoamérica*, Madrid, Revista Estudios, 1968; José Brunet, “La Virgen María, legado de España a América”, *Estudios*, 27 (1971), pp. 595-606; Zuriaga Senent, *La imagen devocional*, pp. 343-346.

fame of the statue – but rather to spread it abroad and attract more pilgrims, especially among seafarers. From this perspective, the lower part of the central scene is particularly interesting: it shows a group of the faithful on their knees, ascending the long flight of steps leading from the sea to the sanctuary, which is shown open with figures praying before the statue of the Madonna di Bonaria. The deliberately clear identification of the site is also striking in the precise positioning of the sanctuary on a hill in front of the sea not far from the city of Cagliari. This is, in fact, one of the oldest artistic representations of the city, showing the church of San Bardilio below – which no longer exists – and, on the right, the hermitage of San Bartolomeo and the coastal tower of Sant’Elia.

In conclusion, the Roman print of 1595 needs to be framed within a broader context of events comprising the canonisation process begun in 1592 during the episcopate of Del Val, and the *Historia y milagros de N. Señora de Buenayre* by Father Antioco Brondo, printed in Cagliari, also in 1595. These three elements were fuelled by the same spirit, and there are numerous interactions between them. Here, too, it is essential to emphasise the importance of the *ex votos*; these are described in minute detail in the process and also in Brondo’s work, and they appear again in the architectural frame of the central scene of the engraving. Hanging from the architrave are six oil lamps with a small boat in the centre, while on the side pillars there are four small pictures, four candles, and a leg on the left one and an arm on the right, all of which can easily be identified in the written sources.

As a result of the archbishop’s intervention, the process thus endorsed the validity of the cult and miracles of the Madonna di Bonaria, Brondo’s work offered a definitive arrangement of the hagiography and contributed to its diffusion, and the engraving became an authentic banner for the Madonna di Bonaria, conceived to attract pilgrims to her sanctuary and to spread her reputation among seafaring folk. These are three different instruments that must be read in light of each other and that made a decisive contribution to the growth of the cult. Although the Madonna di Bonaria enjoyed great popularity in the last years of the 16th century, as witnessed in the *Chrorographia Sardiniae* by Giovanni Francesco Fara, composed before 1585, it was above all in the early years of the 17th century that it became a veritable symbol of Sardinian identity and religion. This is evident in the report the Visitor General Martín Carrillo made to King Philip III of Spain in 1612, which noted, among the chief sites of pilgrimage in Sardinia, the sanctuaries of the Madonna delle Grazie in Sassari and of the

Madonna di Bonaria in Cagliari, stressing how the statue of Our Lady had arrived by sea in a wooden crate.⁴⁸

Another interesting source is the tale told in 1621 by the Mercedarian Gabriel Téllez, known as Tirso de Molina, in his famous miscellany *Cigarrales de Toledo*, which includes in the third chapter a striking literary vision of Sardinia. The story is told by the Catalan lady Dionisia, who, together with her beloved Don Dalmao, came to administer the vast feuds of the nobleman Don Guillén di Oristano. To avoid suspicion, and so that they would be accepted by the vassals, the nobleman had them dress in the costumes of the local people and provided them with a fabricated past in which they did not come from Catalonia but were natives of Majorca: “que habiendo venido en romería a Nuestra Señora de Buen Aire, patrona milagrosa de Cerdeña, y único refugio de aquellos mares, nos había encontrado en Cáller y ofrecídonos partidos aventajados, con que olvidar nuestra naturaleza y cuidar del gobierno de su hacienda”.⁴⁹

Beyond the desire of Tirso de Molina to note the importance of the sanctuary managed by his fellow Mercedarians, the decision to disguise the couple as pilgrims seeking the protection of the Madonna di Bonaria offers eloquent evidence of how well-established this devotion was among seafarers at the beginning of the 17th century.

48. Maria Luisa Plaisant, “Martin Carillo e le sue relazioni sulle condizioni della Sardegna”, *Studi Sardi*, 21 (1970), pp. 175-262: 230-241.

49. Tirso de Molina, *Los Cigarrales de Toledo*, Madrid, Editorial Castalia, 1996, p. 371.

SARA CAREDDA

The Madonna di Bonaria: Images and Iconography from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic*

The cult of the Madonna di Bonaria is one of the most deeply-rooted devotions in Sardinia. In 1908, she was declared the supreme patron saint of the island by Pope Pius X, and her statue, conserved in the Mercedarian sanctuary in the city of Cagliari, still attracts numerous pilgrims from Sardinia and elsewhere.¹

This splendid statue, of exquisite workmanship, is considered in artistic terms to be one of the finest examples of wood sculpture in Sardinia (Fig. 1). It portrays Our Lady standing, with long wavy hair completely covering her shoulders and falling down her back, wearing a magnificent cloak of *estofado de oro*. On her left arm, she holds the Christ Child bearing the terrestrial globe. In her right hand, she holds a lit candle set into a small silver boat, an attribute that identifies her as the protector of seafarers. This statue was traditionally believed to date to the year 1370,

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1. According to the tradition recorded for the first time in late 16th-century sources, the statue arrived in Cagliari in miraculous circumstances. A ship sailing from Spain to Italy was overtaken by a sudden storm. When the entire cargo had been thrown into the sea, one crate remained afloat and began to move between the waves, calming the fury of the storm as it passed and, more importantly, guiding the ship towards a safe harbour, finally being washed ashore at the foot of a hill on the outskirts of Cagliari. The passengers disembarked, but no one was able to open the crate until, at the suggestion of a young boy, the Mercedarian friars were summoned. After they had transported the crate to their convent, they opened it to find the statue of Our Lady inside. See Felipe Guimerán, *Breve historia de la orden de Nuestra Señora de la Merced* [...], Valencia, en casa de los herederos de Iuan Navarro, 1591, pp. 61-65.



Fig. 1. Anonymous, *Madonna di Bonaria* (last quarter of the 15th century), Cagliari, Sanctuary of the Madonna di Bonaria.

but art historians have assigned it to the last quarter of the 15th century. The question of attribution sparked intense debate, starting from the pioneering studies of Raffaello Causa who, in the 1950s and 1960s, proposed the names of the sculptors Pietro and Giovanni Alemanno, whereas Corrado Maltese and Renata Serra referred the statue to the Master of the Madonna di Bonaria.² In the years that followed, Roberto Pane shifted the milieu of execution to the Flemish area, and Arturo Fittipaldi to that of Burgundy.³ In 1984, Guido Donatone attributed the statue to the sculptor Simone di Martino da Zara; Maria Francesca Porcella later subscribed to the same opinion, while Roberto Middione referred it to a generic Flemish-Burgundy master active in Naples.⁴ Finally, in more recent research, Maria Grazia Scano ascribed the statue to the Catalan-Valencian cultural sphere.⁵

Further contributions and reflections are required before the last word can be said on the topic of its attribution, but this chapter moves in another direction, offering an initial approach to the iconography of the Madonna di Bonaria and its codification. The image of the Madonna began to circulate

2. Raffaello Causa, “Contributi alla conoscenza della scultura del ‘400 a Napoli”, in *Sculture lignee della Campania*, exhibition catalog, ed. by Ferdinando Bologna and Raffaello Causa, Naples, stab. Tip. Giuseppe Montanino, 1950, pp. 105-150: 134-135; Corrado Maltese, Renata Serra, *Arte in Sardegna dal V al XVIII secolo*, Rome, De Luca, 1962, p. 207; Renata Serra, “Per il Maestro della Madonna di Bonaria”, *Studi Sardi*, 21 (1968), pp. 52-72.

3. Roberto Pane, *Il Rinascimento nell’Italia Meridionale*, 2 vols, vol. II, Milan, Edizioni Di Comunità, 1977, pp. 164-165; Arturo Fittipaldi, “Relazioni europee e rapporti tra centro e periferia nel periodo aragonese”, *La Voce della Campania*, n.p. (1979), pp. 295-321: 306.

4. Guido Donatone, “Contributo alla storia della maiolica e della scultura lignea napoletane del secolo 15 alla luce di nuovi documenti”, in *Studi di storia dell’arte in memoria di Mario Rotili*, ed. by Istituto Storia dell’Arte dell’Università di Napoli, Benevento, Banca Sannitica, 1984, pp. 351-358: 354; Maria Francesca Porcella, “Un nome per il Maestro della Madonna di Bonaria”, *Notiziario*, numero unico della Soprintendenza ai Beni Ambientali, Architettonici, Artistici, Storici di Cagliari e Oristano, 8-9 (1991), n.p.; Roberto Middione, “Presenze di scultori nordici a Napoli in età aragonese”, in *Scritti di storia dell’arte in onore di Raffaello Causa*, ed. by Pierluigi Leone de Castris, Naples, Electa, 1988, pp. 91-96: 93-94.

5. Maria Grazia Scano, “Percorsi della scultura lignea in estofado de oro dal tardo Quattrocento alla fine del Seicento in Sardegna”, in *Estofado de oro. La statuaria lignea nella Sardegna spagnola*, Cagliari, Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, 2001, pp. 21-55: 23-25; Maria Grazia Scano, “L’apporto campano nella statuaria lignea della Sardegna spagnola”, in *La scultura meridionale in età moderna nei suoi rapporti con la circolazione mediterranea*, ed. by Letizia Gaeta, 2 vols, vol. II, Galatina, Congedo, 2007, pp. 123-192: 123-125.

in the early modern era among seafarers who invoked her protection against the most common maritime disasters and the countless perils of travelling by sea, including storms, shipwrecks, drownings, becalmings, pirate attacks and more.

In addition to art history studies, this analysis was also triggered by a book on the Marian cult in Sardinia written by Gabriele Piras in 1961,⁶ and by several short essays on the history of the sanctuary of Bonaria published by Maria Mercè Costa and Luigi Cherchi in 1973.⁷ However, the most significant increase in studies on the cult of Bonaria has taken place in the last twenty years, starting with the contribution made in 2001 by Antioco Piseddu addressing cultural and liturgical aspects of the cult and considering for the first time how the statue of the Madonna was displayed to the faithful and how the respective altar was modified over the centuries.⁸ In 2008, a collective work was published to commemorate the centenary of the elevation of the Madonna di Bonaria to the rank of supreme patron of Sardinia; while framed in a local context of confessional interest, the volume also touched on artistic questions.⁹ Even more important is the exhaustive research carried out by Roberto Porrà and Maria Giuseppina Meloni. Published in various essays between 2006 and 2019, these studies were based on the analysis of a large number of archival and printed sources, yielding important data to cast new light on the history of the cult.¹⁰ Among the texts Meloni analysed, for instance,

6. Gabriele Piras, *Storia del culto mariano in Sardegna*, Cagliari, Scuola Tipografica Franciscana San Mauro, 1961, pp. 172-176.

7. Luigi Cherchi, "I santi venerati dai Cagliaritari. La Madonna di Bonaria", *Almanacco di Cagliari*, 1973, n.p.; Maria Mercè Costa Paretas, *El Santuari de Santa Maria de Bonaire a la ciutat de Caller*, Cagliari, Ettore Gasperini Editore, 1973.

8. Antioco Piseddu, "Le chiese cagliaritano: il Santuario di Bonaria, primario centro di fede", *Almanacco di Cagliari*, 2001, n.p.

9. *Ecce Sardinia Mater Tua. 1908-2008*, ed. by Mario Girau and Efsio Schirru, Monastir, Grafiche Ghiani, 2008. See, in particular, the contributions by Maria Francesca Porcella, "Per una lettura catechetica del simulacro della Madonna di Bonaria", pp. 65-70, and by Patricia Olivo, "Riflessioni sul patrimonio storico-artistico del convento dei Padri Mercedari di N. S. Di Bonaria", pp. 87-98.

10. Roberto Porrà, "Il santuario della Madonna di Bonaria (Cagliari), avamposto della cristianità nel secolare conflitto con i corsari barbareschi", in *Culti, santuari, pellegrinaggi in Sardegna e nella Penisola Iberica tra Medioevo ed età contemporanea*, ed. by Olivetta Schena, Cagliari-Genoa-Turin, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche-Istituto di Storia dell'Europa Mediterranea, 2006, pp. 503-534; Roberto Porrà, *Il culto della Madonna di Bonaria di Cagliari: note storiche sull'origine sarda del toponimo di Buenos Aires*, Cagliari,

is the manuscript related to a canonisation process of 1592, in which the Archbishop of Cagliari, Francisco del Vall, certified the antiquity of the cult and provided the first official recognition by ecclesiastical authorities.¹¹ Porrà focused instead on a book, *Historia y milagros de N. Señora de Buenayre*, published in 1595 by Antioco Brondo, who was prior of the namesake convent at the time.¹²

These documents are particularly valuable in that they contain the evidence of dozens of miracles recorded since the early years of the 16th century. They also describe, in the greatest detail, over 100 votive tablets illustrating some of the miracles, complete with descriptive captions. Still further, they record the presence of numerous *ex votos* of a maritime nature, in particular models of ships, ship's helms and cables. Unfortunately, none of these models has survived, but the sanctuary does conserve similar *ex votos* of more recent date.¹³ This evidence provides incontrovertible proof of the popularity of the cult among seafarers of the time and, in particular, of its international diffusion, certified by the presence of followers not only from Sardinia, but also from France, Liguria, Sicily, Naples, Catalonia, the Basque Country and elsewhere. As Meloni suggested, it is probable that the growing fame of the sanctuary led to the production of a new statue towards the end of the 15th century, when the old 14th-century sculpture of the Madonna was replaced with the precious statue still venerated today.

Arkadia, 2011; Roberto Porrà, *La Madonna di Bonaria: un culto tra Cagliari e Buenos Aires*, Cagliari, Tipografia dell'Unione Sarda, 2013; Maria Giuseppina Meloni, "Ordini religiosi e santuari mariani. I mercedari e il culto per Nostra Signora di Bonaria a Cagliari tra Quattro e Cinquecento", in *Culti, santuari, pellegrinaggi*, pp. 339-369; Maria Giuseppina Meloni, *Il santuario della Madonna di Bonaria: origini e diffusione di un culto. Con edizione del processo canonico sull'arrivo prodigioso del simulacro di Bonaria*, Rome, Viella, 2011; Maria Giuseppina Meloni, "Culto dei santi e devozione mariana nella Sardegna catalana: il Santuario di Bonaria a Cagliari tra fede e identità", in *Sardegna catalana*, ed. by Anna Maria Oliva and Olivetta Schena, Barcelona, Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2014, pp. 210-227; Maria Giuseppina Meloni, "Santuari e ordini religiosi tra Medioevo e prima Età Moderna", in *Santuari d'Italia. Sardegna*, ed. by Maria Giuseppina Meloni and Olivetta Schena, Rome, De Luca, 2019, pp. 75-88. For an overview, see also: Giorgio Gracco, "La grande stagione dei santuari mariani (XIV-XVI)", in *I santuari cristiani d'Italia. Bilancio del censimento e proposte interpretative*, ed. by André Vauchez, Rome, École Française de Rome, 2007, pp. 17-44.

11. Meloni, *Il santuario della Madonna di Bonaria*, pp. 105-168.

12. Antioco Brondo, *Historia y milagros de N. Señora de Buenayre*, Callar, por Juan Maria Galcerino, 1595; Porrà, "Il santuario della Madonna di Bonaria".

13. Maria Giuseppina Cossu Pinna, "Gli ex voto del santuario di Nostra Signora di Bonaria", in *Ecce Sardinia Mater Tua*, pp. 81-86.

This statue rapidly acquired a miraculous reputation.¹⁴ Based on these premises, the question I wish to address is: which image of the Madonna di Bonaria was promoted on the international scene in parallel with the spread of her cult?

1. *The codification of the iconography*

To the best of our knowledge, the earliest images relate to engravings and coincide chronologically with the promotion of the cult made by the Mercedarians of the Cagliari convent in the last years of the 16th century. The aforementioned *Historia y milagros de N. Señora de Buenayre* by Antioco Brondo of 1595 includes a small woodcut of mediocre quality portraying a Virgin and Child in a landscape. It is probable that this was a reused block already in the printer's possession, as suggested by the worn edges and, in particular, by the fact that the image shows a generic Virgin. This suggests that no faithful reproductions of the prodigious statue of the Madonna di Bonaria were in circulation at the time.

In the same year, the Mercedarians of Cagliari commissioned a large-scale print from a Belgian engraver active in Rome, Marten van Valckenborch III.¹⁵ This shows, in the centre, the Madonna between saints Cecilia and Eulalia and, beneath them, the sanctuary of Bonaria and pilgrims ascending towards it by the long flight of steps leading up the hillside. Set around the central composition are a series of smaller images illustrating the foundation of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy, the prodigious arrival of the statue of the Madonna in Cagliari, and various miracles attributed to it. For a detailed analysis of the complex iconography of this print, see the studies of Scano.¹⁶ Here, we shall focus only on the image of the Madonna di Bonaria in the centre. The Virgin is shown standing, wearing the habit and the coat of arms of the Mercedarian Order, with two angels holding up her cloak in accordance with the classic

14. Meloni, "Culto dei santi e devozione", p. 220.

15. Reproduced here in the chapter by Ramon Dilla Martí.

16. Maria Grazia Scano, "La pittura del Seicento", in *La società sarda in età spagnola*, ed. by Francesco Manconi, 2 vols, vol. II, Quart, Musumeci, 1993, pp. 124-153: 126-127; Maria Grazia Scano, "La città e dintorni di Cagliari nell'arte sacra", in *Cagliari: l'immagine della città nella cartografia, nelle vedute e nell'arte sacra dal 16 al 19 secolo*, ed. by Rita Pamela Ladogana, Nuoro, Ilisso, 2020, pp. 291-324: 293-294.

iconography of Our Lady of Mercy. In her arms, she is holding the Child bearing the terrestrial globe, and she has a rose in her right hand.

The iconographic differences compared to the statue are immediately striking. Apropos this, the sources record that at the end of the 16th century the statue was dressed in silk robes, frequently donated by the faithful, which concealed the splendid cloak in *estofado de oro*, and that the Madonna held a bunch of flowers or coral in her hand.¹⁷ From our perspective, the print reveals the clear intention to bind the cult inseparably to the Mercedarian Order and, even more importantly, to promote the Cagliari sanctuary as a site of pilgrimage. Moreover, as suggested by Porrà, it is plausible to imagine that the characteristic attributes of the lit candle and the silver boat were added to the statue later to stress the identification of the Virgin as the protector of seafarers.¹⁸

In the 17th century, the graphic representations of the miraculous statue of Bonaria began to change. This is demonstrated by another engraving of mediocre quality adorning a single sheet portraying the *Gozos de la Virgen Santissima del Buen Ayre*, conserved in a private collection in Barcelona (Fig. 2). The work is not dated, and its chronology should be treated with caution, especially because in the case of the *gozos* – poetic compositions associated with a particular cult and specific to the Spanish world – the blocks or plates were frequently reutilised over a long period, even for more than a century. Nevertheless, with all due prudence, the image can be ascribed to the 17th century and to local workmanship. This is an extremely important exemplar because it is clearly intended as a copy of the Cagliari statue with all its formal characteristics: the Virgin standing, the cloak in *estofado de oro*, the posture of the Child, and the attributes of the lit candle and the boat. What could have been the model for this print? Here I would point out that, at the time, there was an altar dedicated to the Madonna di Bonaria in the Mercedarian church in Barcelona, the general house of the order. The chapel recorded in the sources has not survived, and we know nothing about its decoration, but it cannot be ruled out that it may have contained a statue modelled on

17. Brondo, *Historia y milagros de N. Señora de Buenayre*, p. 214. On the “clothing” of sacred images, see Fabrizio Tola, “Statue da vestire: immagini e pratiche culturali nella Sardegna moderna”, in *L’Officina di Efesto. Giornate di studi in ricordo di Giovanni Previtali*, ed. by Francesco Abbate and Nicola Cleopazzo, Naples, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2019, pp. 101-130.

18. Porrà, *La Madonna di Bonaria*, p. 64.



Fig. 2. Anonymous, *Gozos de la Virgen Santissima de Buen Ayre* (17th century), Barcelona, private collection.

that of Cagliari.¹⁹ Similarly, the mariners' confraternity of Vilanova i la Geltrú, a town in the province of Barcelona, venerated a statue of the Madonna di Bonaria in its chapel in the church of the Capuchins, which is no longer in existence. This statue, unfortunately also now lost, was made in 1606 by Agustí Pujol (the elder), a leading exponent of Catalan Baroque sculpture.²⁰

Evidence of this kind is valuable in that it proves the diffusion of the cult, and hence also of the iconography, on the eastern coast Spain. The devotion rapidly reached Madrid too, where another print was produced around the end of the 17th century, this time superbly executed by the engraver Marcos Orozco. In a distinctly Baroque device, four cherubs hold up a curtain that reveals the Madonna di Bonaria in the centre. In iconographic terms, the image is minutely detailed and an absolutely true copy of the Cagliari statue. A cartouche in the lower section identifies the image as the “Verd[adero] R[etrato] de N[uestra] S[eñora] Del Buen Ayre que se venera en el R[eal] Convento de N[uestra] S[eñora] de la Merced [...]”. Here, on the one hand, we note the use of the term “retrato” (portrait), implying an intentional

19. Archivo de la Corona de Aragón, *Órdenes religiosos, Inventarios Monacales Hacienda*, vol. 2656, f. 238v.

20. Joan Bosch Ballbona, *Agustí Pujol: la culminació de l'escultura renaixentista a Catalunya*, Bellaterra, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2009, pp. 93-103.

imitation of the model; on the other hand, we also note that Marcos Orozco did not draw inspiration directly from the prototype, but rather from a copy that was very probably an image commissioned by Juan Francisco Castelví, Marquis of Laconi. Castelví was a Sardinian nobleman who lived at court and who, in 1693, had a painting of the Madonna di Bonaria executed that was then placed above an altar in the church of the Merced Calzada in the capital. As further evidence of his devotion to the patron of seafarers, he also ordered the publication of a book on the history of the cult in 1696.²¹

Therefore, towards the end of the 17th century the cult was active in several Spanish cities and the iconography had by then been codified. Unfortunately, no coeval images are available for the Sardinian context. Nevertheless, moving towards the 18th century, a series of paintings and prints have come down to us that confirm the existence of a specific and well-defined model. For instance, there is a painting in a private collection in Cagliari portraying the Madonna di Bonaria with Saint Antiochus kneeling at her feet.²² Even more important are two prints: the first is a modest burin engraving by Raffaele d'Angelo showing the Madonna di Bonaria set against a seascape with the inscription "Verdadero Retrato de la Virgen SS de Nuestra Señora del Buenayre". The second, of more precious workmanship, bears "Santa Maria del Buen Aire patrona del Reino de Sardenya" on the cartouche. It has been analysed and described by Scano, who highlighted the sinuous figure, the elegant drapery, the delicacy of the touch, the soft chiaroscuro and the decorative lightness of the lavish Rococo frame, which she concluded suggests a dating before the mid-18th century.²³ The iconography of the "verdadero retrato", or true portrait, would appear to have been codified.²⁴ It is also important to note

21. Vicencio Squarzafigo, *Compendio historial del origen, antiguedad y milagros de la sagrada imagen de Nuestra Señora de Buen Ayre, patrona del reyno de Cerdeña*, Madrid, por Manuel Ruiz de Murga, 1696.

22. Nicola Valle, "Le raffigurazioni artistiche del simulacro di N. S. di Bonaria", in *Nostra Signora di Bonaria*, ed. by Remo Concas, Brunello Massazza and Pasquale Pasquariello, Cagliari, Industrie Grafiche Editoriali Sarde, 1970, n.p.; *S. Antioco: da primo evangelizzatore di Sulci a glorioso Protomartire "Patrono della Sardegna"*, ed. by Roberto Lai and Marco Massa, Sant'Antioco, Edizione Arciere, 2011, p. 241.

23. Scano, "La città e dintorni di Cagliari", p. 310.

24. On the iconographic model of the "verdadero retrato" in Spain and Latin America, see Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, "Trampantojos a lo divino", in *Lecturas de Historia del arte*, vol. III, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Instituto de Estudios Iconográficos Ephialte, 1992, pp. 139-155; Alfonso Rodríguez de Ceballos, "Trampantojos a lo divino. Iconos pintados de Cristo y de

that the Madonna di Bonaria was venerated as the patron saint of Sardinia long before the official proclamation made by Pius X in 1908.

2. *A new look: the Virgen del Buen Ayre of Seville*

Most of the images analysed so far refer directly or indirectly to the Sardinian context or to the Mercedarian Order. However, as already mentioned, the cult of the Madonna di Bonaria was embraced by seafarers of all nationalities sailing between many different ports and territories. It was probably through the principal marine trade routes that the cult arrived at the throbbing heart of the Spanish economy: Seville, which officially adopted the Madonna di Bonaria, giving her a new look.

As is known, between the 16th century and the beginning of the 18th, Seville held the royal monopoly on trade with the New World, organised through the various routes of the *Carrera de Indias* and controlled by the ultra-powerful *Casa de la Contratación*. The oldest evidence of the cult is connected with this latter institution: namely, the central panel of a polyptych currently conserved in the Alcázar but that originally adorned the altar of the chapel of the *Casa de la Contratación* (Fig. 3). The painting is attributed to Alejo Fernández and has been dated by Enrique Valdivieso to around 1535.²⁵ It portrays a standing Virgin on the model of Our Lady of Mercy; taking shelter beneath her ample cloak are seafarers and various illustrious figures connected with the discovery of the Americas, among whom we can recognise Christopher Columbus, Amerigo Vespucci, Hernán Cortés, Martín Alonso Pinzón and others.²⁶ Below her feet is a seascape with various galleons and caravels, explaining why the image is known as the *Virgen de los Navegantes* or *Virgen del Buen Aire*. It is important to clarify that, beyond the generic Marian presence and the sailing ships, it can scarcely be said that the title corresponds precisely to that of the

la Virgen a partir de imágenes de culto en América Meridional”, in *Actas del III congreso internacional del barroco americano: territorio, arte, espacio y sociedad*, ed. by Arsenio Moreno Mendoza, Seville, Universidad Pablo de Olavide, 2001, pp. 24-33.

25. Enrique Valdivieso, *Historia de la pintura sevillana: siglos XIII al XX*, Seville, Guadalquivir, 1986, p. 55.

26. Narciso Sentenach Cabañas, “La Virgen del Amparo de los Navegantes o del Buen Aires: tabla al óleo por Alejo Fernández, de la casa de Contratación de Sevilla”, *Arte Español. Revista de la Sociedad de Amigos del Arte*, 7 (1924-1925), pp. 4-10.



Fig. 3. Alejo Fernández, *Virgen de los navegantes o del Buen Aire* (c. 1535), Seville, Alcázar.

miraculous Cagliari statue. There are, in fact, considerable iconographic differences in the representation of the Virgin. Moreover, in the older inventories the work is indicated perfunctorily as “an altarpiece of Our Lady”.²⁷ In any case, as has already been stressed, the representation of the Madonna di Bonaria was not yet codified at the time and hence could be portrayed in different ways.

Conversely, there are no doubts about the identity of the patron of a powerful confraternity that emerged, again in Seville, around the mid-16th century: the *Cofradía de Nuestra Señora del Buen Aire*.²⁸ This was a corporation that brought together the pilots, helmsmen, captains and owners of the ships that set sail for the New World, so that it was also known as the *Hermandad de los Mareantes*. Its origins are unknown, but the studies of Antonio Hernández, Celestino López, Luis Navarro and Carmen Borrego have made it possible to document its existence since the 1550s. The respective statutes were officially recognised by the *Casa de la Contratación* and by the Archbishop of Seville in 1561.²⁹ Later,

27. José Torre Revello, *La Virgen del Buen Aire*, Buenos Aires, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 1931.

28. The case of Seville should be contextualised within the broad and complex phenomenon of the Spanish confraternities in the early modern world, on which there is an extensive bibliography. To mention a few seminal studies: Elena Sánchez de Madariaga, *Cofradías y sociabilidad en el Madrid el Antiguo Régimen*, Madrid, UAM Ediciones, 1997; Elena Sánchez de Madariaga, “Las cofradías europeas y su proyección en la América colonial”, in *Mirando desde el puente: estudios en homenaje al prof. James S. Amelang*, ed. by Fernando Andrés Robres and Mauro Hernández Benítez, Madrid, UAM Ediciones, 2019, pp. 327-338.

29. Antonio Hernández Parrales, *Santa María del Buen Aire. Ensayo histórico*, Cádiz, Establecimientos Cerón y Librerías Cervantes, 1943; Celestino López Martínez, “La Hermandad de Santa María del Buen Aire de la Universidad de Mareantes”, *Anuarios de Estudios Americanos*, 1 (1944), pp. 701-721; Celestino López Martínez, *Hermandades y cofradías de la gente de mar sevillana en los siglos XVI y XVII*, Seville, s.n., 1947; Luis Navarro García, “Pilotos, maestros y señores de naos en la Carrera de las Indias”, *Archivo Hispalense*, 141-146 (1967), pp. 241-295; María del Carmen Borrego Plà, “Los hermanos de la Cofradía de mareantes en el siglo XVI”, in *Andalucía y América en el siglo XVI. Actas de las II jornadas de Andalucía y América*, ed. by Bibiano Torres Ramírez and José J. Hernández Palomo, 2 vols, vol. II, Seville, Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, Huelva, Diputación de Huelva, 1983, pp. 361-387; María del Carmen Borrego Plà, “Los hermanos de la Cofradía de mareantes en el siglo XVII”, in *Andalucía y América en el siglo XVI. Actas de las III jornadas de Andalucía y América*, ed. by Bibiano Torres Ramírez and José J. Hernández Palomo, 2 vols, vol. II, Seville, Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, Huelva, Diputación de Huelva, 1985, pp. 237-252.

the same confraternity decided to establish a second and legally parallel institution known as the *Universidad de Mareantes*, which managed a very important school of navigation that took in orphans and trained them for a future nautical career.³⁰ The first headquarters of the confraternity was a simple church with adjacent hospital, located in the maritime district of Triana on the banks of the Guadalquivir.³¹ Then, in the early 18th century, the premises were moved to the Palacio de San Telmo, a magnificent recently-built palace that is still one of the outstanding gems of Sevillian Baroque. There are many historical, architectural and art history studies on this important building that has made a profound mark on the identity of Seville.³²

As regards the obligations of the confraternity, we know that they consisted essentially of mutual aid and charity. For instance, it guaranteed all its members a decent funeral and set aside funds for the liberation of those who were taken prisoner by pirates, which was a constant danger in both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. The outgoings were covered by the membership fees and, more significantly, by a tax called *cuartón* that had to be paid to the confraternity by every vessel entering or leaving the

30. Luis Navarro García, María del Carmen Borrego Plà, *Actas de la Universidad de Mareantes*, Seville, Diputación Provincial, 1972; Luis Navarro García, “La Casa de la Universidad de Mareantes de Sevilla (siglos XVI y XVII)”, in *La Casa de la Contratación y la navegación entre España y las Indias*, ed. by Enriqueta Vilar Vilar, Antonio Acosta Rodríguez and Adolfo L. González Rodríguez, Seville, CSIC-Universidad de Sevilla, 2003, pp. 743-760.

31. Francisco Ollero Lobato, “El Hospital de Mareantes de Triana: arquitectura y patronazgo artístico”, *Atrio. Revista de Historia del Arte*, 4 (1992), pp. 61-70: 61-62.

32. Manuel Serrano Ortega, *Noticia histórica del Seminario de Mareantes y Real Colegio de San Telmo de Sevilla*, Seville, n.p., 1901; Francisco Barras Aragón, “Circunstancias que motivaron la fundación del Colegio de San Telmo de Sevilla”, in *Estudios sobre la ciencia española del siglo XVII*, Madrid, Gráfica Universal, 1935, pp. 279-321; Antonio Herrera García, “Estudio Histórico sobre el Real Colegio Seminario de San Telmo de Sevilla”, *Archivo Hispalense*, 89 (1958), pp. 234-266; Manuel Babio Walls, *El Real Colegio Seminario de San Telmo. 1681-1981. Bosquejo de su fundación*, Seville, Escuela Universitaria de Náutica de Sevilla, 1981; Mercedes Jos López, *La Capilla de San Telmo*, Seville, Diputación Provincial, 1986; José María Vázquez Soto, *San Telmo. Biografía de un palacio*, Seville, Consejería de Cultura, 1990; Teodoro Falcón Márquez, *El Palacio de San Telmo*, Seville, Ediciones Gever, 1991; Elisa María Jiménez Jiménez, *El Real Colegio Seminario de San Telmo de Sevilla. 1681-1808*, Seville, Universidad de Sevilla, 2002; Marta García Gallarón, “*Taller de Mareantes*”: *el Real Colegio Seminario de San Telmo de Sevilla*, 2 vols, Seville, Cajasol, 2007.

port of Seville. In addition, all ships were equipped with a special collection box bearing the image of the *Virgen del Buen Aire*, which represented another source of income for the confraternity.³³

Although the period documentation does not specify the origins of the cult or make any reference to Sardinia, the coincidence of the name and the very close links to the sea and to navigation leave little doubt about the fact that it was the same Madonna venerated in Cagliari. Her feast was celebrated with great pomp by the Sevillian confraternity in the month of September, with vespers, mass and solemn homily. The feast days of St Peter and St Andrew were also important, and they too were invoked as co-patrons and protectors against maritime disasters.³⁴

The high altar of the church of the *Hermandad* – officially inaugurated in 1573 – was initially adorned with an otherwise unspecified crucifix.³⁵ Then, in 1600, the late-Renaissance sculptor Juan de Oviedo was commissioned to create a new wooden altar, comprising a magnificent statue of the *Virgen del Buen Aire* (Fig. 4).³⁶ In 1704, the work was transferred to the chapel of the new premises in Palacio de San Telmo, where it is still conserved today. The archival sources confirm that, following this move, in 1725 another artist, Pedro Duque Cornejo, also worked on the sculpture to adapt it to a new niche. This fact triggered a debate among scholars to determine whether Cornejo's operation involved merely minor adjustments – as sustained by Mercedes Jos – or more significant reworkings.³⁷ Regarding this point, the report on the latest restoration carried out in 2006 identified the use of two different types of wood that can be referred to different hands and different times of execution.³⁸

Without entering into stylistic or technical details here, it is interesting to note that the 1600 contract signed by the confraternity and Juan de Oviedo specified that the figure of the Madonna was to be in full relief, bearing a child in her arms and a ship in her hand, set upon

33. Gallarón, “*Taller de Mareantes*”, vol. I, p. 46.

34. Borrego Plà, “Los hermanos de la Cofradía de mareantes en el siglo XVI”, pp. 364-365.

35. Ollero Lobato, “El Hospital de Mareantes”, pp. 61-62.

36. López Martínez, “La Hermandad de Santa María”, pp. 701-721.

37. Jos López, *La Capilla de San Telmo*, pp. 51-54.

38. *Memoria final de intervención. “Virgen del Buen Aire”*, Seville, Instituto Andaluz del Patrimonio Histórico, 2006, pp. 8-9.



Fig. 4. Juan de Oviedo and Pedro Duque Cornejo, *Virgen del Buen Aire* (1600-1725), Seville, Palacio de San Telmo. © José Luis Filpo Cabana.

a cloud with angels so that she seems to be borne upon the air.³⁹ There is no reference to the Cagliari statue as a possible model, and even a cursory comparison of the two sculptures reveals all the differences. The Seville Virgin is seated symbolically on a throne of clouds, with cherubs and a crescent moon with the horns pointing upwards. Her left arm is supporting the standing Child Jesus without the terrestrial globe, while in her right hand she holds an elegant model ship, probably a caravel, made by the silversmith Juan de Garay in 1721.⁴⁰ Were it not precisely for this generic attribution of the sailing ship – the symbol of Marian protection – the two statues would have nothing in common. It therefore seems likely that the cult was the same, but channelled through two iconographically independent images.

The fame of the Seville statue and the devotion towards it increased enormously over the 17th and 18th centuries. According to López, the image of Juan de Oviedo's exquisite sculpture was the last thing the sailors saw before leaving for the Indies.⁴¹ Also bearing witness to the development of the cult is a series of votive tablets conserved in the Palacio de San Telmo featuring scenes of miracles complete with captions that illustrate all the perils of the sea and, most importantly, the effective intercession of Our Lady. For instance, in an *ex voto* dated 1729, we read:

Navegando el año de 1729 el galeón nombrado Nuestra Señora de Begoña, alias el Soldora, hacía tanta agua que en siete horas no pudieron vencerla las bombas. Y habiéndose encomendado a Nuestra Señora del Buen Aire al punto hizo patente su poderío hasta ponerlo a salvo.⁴²

Another oil painting dated 1761 relates how:

Navegando Don Francisco Fernandez, Colegial que fue de este Real Seminario y actual Hermano de la Universidad de Mareantes, de capitán i

39. Heliodoro Sancho Corbacho, *Arte sevillano de los siglos XVI y XVII*, Seville, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, 1931, n.p.

40. José Roda Peña, "Esculturas marianas hispalenses de raigambre marinera", in *Andalucía, América y el mar: Actas de las IX Jornadas de Andalucía y América*, ed. by Bibiano Torres Ramírez, Seville, Diputación de Huelva, 1991, pp. 323-343: 334-335.

41. López Martínez, *Hermanidades y cofradías*, n.p.

42. Antonio Hernández Parrales, "Origen histórico de la devoción a Ntra. Sra. de Buenos Aires y estudio arqueológico de su imagen", in *Crónica oficial del Congreso Mariano Hispano-Americano de Sevilla*, Seville, Imprenta Sáez Hermanos, 1930, pp. 869-883: 877.



Fig. 5. Anonymous, votive tablet (1803), Seville, Palacio de San Telmo.

piloto en el navío San Ygnacio que venía del Puerto de Buenos Aires para el de Cádiz, hallándose de 7 a 8 grados al sur de la línea i 200 leguas de la costa de Brasil, descubrió un agua el navío que cada hora hazia 75 pulgadas i en este conflicto acudió dicho capitán a María Santísima del Buen Aire i por intercesión de dicha Señora llegaron felizmente al Puerto de Pernambuco donde se remediaron.⁴³

Finally, a more recent votive tablet from 1803 shows a vessel in the midst of a terrible storm, swallowed up by the waves but protected by the *Virgen del Buen Aire* – in the form of the statue by Juan de Oviedo – who appears in the upper left-hand corner amidst clouds, revealing her supernatural nature (Fig. 5). This simple iconographic device perfectly

43. Torre Revello, *La Virgen del Buen Aire*, p. 28.

illustrates the heroic attitude of the Virgin, who, far from adopting a passive role restricted to being venerated in her sanctuary, intervenes in an active and decisive manner in a dangerous situation, calming the raging waters and saving her devotees from certain death. The image therefore illustrates all the efficacy of her intervention. To further clarify the entity of the miracle, the inscription beneath explains how:

Navegando del Puerto de La Havana al de Cádiz Don Josef Vázquez Argüelles, Colegial que fue de este Real Colegio, Capitán y Piloto de la fragata española nombrada Virgen del Buen Ayre, (alias) las Ánimas, experimentó en el transcurso del viaje tiempos contrarios, con fuertes huracanes, mares gruesísimas, de suerte que el día 4 de enero de 1803 de su navegación, hallándose empeñado sobre el Cabo de San Vicente con un incendio de viento perdió toda vida y descubrió 8 pulgadas de agua por hora, en cuyo conflicto recurrió el Capitán a la Titular del buque, ofreciéndole el trinquete, y por intercesión de la Señora llegó con feliz tiempo a los dos días al puerto de su destino.

These few examples illustrate perfectly the most common disasters that beset seafarers in the early modern period. Even more significantly, they explain what the principal vehicle of devotion was: the sailors from Seville who ploughed the waters from one side of the Atlantic to the other, bearing with them the cult and the image of their patron saint. This explains José Roda's observation that the *Virgen del Buen Aire* is the Sevillian Marian statue with the closest links to the Americas.⁴⁴

3. *On the other side of the Atlantic*

Between the 16th and 17th century, the community of the *Mareantes* became one of the most powerful and influential in Seville. It controlled most of the commercial imports and exports from Spain and even set up branches in several American ports, such as Veracruz in Mexico and Puerto Rico.⁴⁵

However, among all the cities in the New World, let us focus on one in particular: Buenos Aires. As we have seen, this port was frequented by sailors from Seville, but the link between the Argentinian capital and

44. Roda Peña, "Esculturas marianas", p. 333.

45. López Martínez, *Hermandades y cofradías*, n.p.

the Madonna di Bonaria actually dates back to the foundation of the city. The circumstances are well known: in 1535, an expedition led by Diego de Mendoza set sail from Sanlúcar de Barrameda, reaching the coast of South America a year later. At the mouth of the Río de la Plata, Mendoza founded a city that he named “Puerto de Santa María de los Buenos Aires” in honour of the patron of seafarers.⁴⁶ Although the reasons for this choice of name are not clear, it may have been justified by a vow made during the sea voyage or by the presence among the crew of two Mercedarian friars from the Seville convent: Juan de Almacián (or Almansa) and Juan de Salazar. The latter, who later settled in the city of Asunción in Paraguay, was particularly close to Mendoza.⁴⁷

There has been lengthy debate between Italian, Spanish and Argentinian scholars on whether the leaders of the expedition had in mind the Madonna di Bonaria conserved by the Cagliari Mercedarians or whether the cult had been channelled through the city of Seville.⁴⁸ This is not the place to dwell on the discussion, in part because it was probably the same cult, albeit developed in different sanctuaries. The point of interest here is the extent to which the veneration of this Virgin from Europe, after whom a newly-founded city had been named, set roots in the New World, and how many

46. Eduardo Madero, *Historia del puerto de Buenos Aires*, Buenos Aires, Imprenta de “La Nación”, 1902, p. 130; Henrique de Gandía, *Historia de la conquista del Río de la Plata y del Paraguay*, Buenos Aires, Librería de A. García Santos, 1932, p. 32; José Torre Revello, *Crónicas del Buenos Aires Colonial*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Bajel, 1943, pp. 43-49.

47. Roberto Porrà, “Puerto de Nuestra Señora Santa María del Buen Aire”, *RiME. Rivista dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Europa Mediterranea*, 6 (2011), pp. 123-136; Paul Groussac, *Mendoza y Garay. Las dos fundaciones de Buenos Aires 1536-1580*, Buenos Aires, Jesús Mendoza, 1916, pp. 131-136; Torre Revello, *Crónicas del Buenos Aires*, p. 47; Guillermo Vázquez, *La Orden de la Merced en Hispanoamérica*, Madrid, Revista Estudios, 1968, pp. 221-225; Euxodio de Palacio, *Los Mercedarios en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires, Ministerio de Cultura y Educación, 1971, pp. 111-116.

48. Torre Revello, *La Virgen del Buen Aire*; Amalia Billi di Sandorno, “El santuario de la Corona de Aragón que dio nombre a Buenos Aires”, *Hispania Sacra*, 18/9 (1956), pp. 395-401; Miguel Herrero García, “Santa María del Buen Aire. La que dio nombre a la capital de la Plata”, *Hispania*, 18/71 (1958), pp. 201-209; José Brunet, *Santa María de los Buenos Aires. Origen y trayectoria*, Buenos Aires, Consejo Nacional de Educación, 1968; José Brunet, “La Virgen María, legado de España a América”, *Estudios*, 27 (1971), pp. 595-606; María Victoria García Olloqui, “La Virgen de los navegantes y la Virgen del Buen Aire. Dos vínculos espirituales y artísticos entre Sevilla y América”, *Espacio y tiempo*, 5-6 (1992), pp. 165-170; Roberto Porrà, “La questione dell’origine del toponimo di Buenos Aires”, *Medioevo. Saggi e Rassegne*, 13 (1988), pp. 171-187; Porrà, *La Madonna di Bonaria*, pp. 61-69.

related images can be traced in the American continent.⁴⁹ For reasons of space, the investigation is confined to the present-day territory of Argentina, starting from the historic circumstances of the capital. As is known, Buenos Aires was abandoned just a few years after the death of Mendoza and then resettled by the “second founder”, Juan de Garay, in 1580.⁵⁰ St Martin of Tours was selected by lot among other potential candidates as patron saint of the city. Marian protection was instead entrusted to Our Lady of the Snows, even though at the same time Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Our Lady of the Rosary and Our Lady of Mercy were also widely invoked.⁵¹ Throughout the early modern era, there appears to be no trace of any type of devotion to the Madonna di Bonaria,⁵² and, as José Brunet has pointed out, no church in the city was dedicated to her.⁵³

The situation changed radically at the end of the 19th century with the celebrations for the 300th anniversary of the founding of the city (or, rather, its re-founding). At this time, the authorities of Buenos Aires began to rediscover its roots and, through the Mercedarians, the story of the miraculous statue of the Virgin conserved in Sardinia – the name of

49. The case of the Madonna di Bonaria has to be contextualised within the broad and complex phenomenon of the genesis of the Marian cults and their transfer from Spain to the Spanish-American territories, on which there is a vast bibliography. Seminal studies include: Francisco Montes González, “La divina pastora de las Almas. Una imagen sevillana para el Nuevo Mundo”, in *Andalucía y América. Cultura artística*, ed. by Rafael López Guzmán, Granada, Atrio, 2009, pp. 99-136; Francisco Montes González, “Virgenes viajeras, altares de papel. Traslaciones pictóricas de advocaciones peninsulares en el arte virreinal”, in *Arte y patrimonio en España y América*, ed. by María de los Ángeles Fernández Valle, Francisco Ollero-Lobato and William Rey Ashfield, Montevideo, Universidad de la República, 2014, pp. 89-118; *Iberoamérica en perspectiva artística: transferencias culturales y devocionales*, ed. by Immaculada Rodríguez Moya, María de los Ángeles Fernández Valle and Carme López Calderón, Castelló, Universitat Jaume I, 2016; *Religiosidad andaluza en América. Repertorio iconográfico*, ed. by Rafael López Guzmán and Francisco Montes González, Granada, Universidad de Granada, 2017; *La Virgen de Guadalupe de Extremadura en América del Sur. Arte e iconografía*, ed. by Rafael López Guzmán and Pilar Mogollón Cano-Cortés, Yuste, Fundación Academia Europea e Iberoamericana de Yuste, 2019; Laura Castillo Compte, “Arte mariano en Latinoamérica”, *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios de Diseño y Comunicación*, 92 (2020), pp. 79-97.

50. De Gandía, *Historia de la conquista*, p. 92.

51. Torre Revello, *Crónicas del Buenos Aires*, pp. 4-5.

52. Patricia Fogelman, “Coordenadas marianas: tiempos y espacios de devoción a la Virgen a través de las cofradías porteñas coloniales”, *Trabajos y comunicaciones*, 30-31 (2004-2005), pp. 118-138.

53. Torre Revello, *Crónicas del Buenos Aires*, p. 49.

which was incredibly similar to that of the Argentinian city – returned to the limelight. In 1894, a decision was made to dedicate a chapel to her in the Caballito district. Then, several years later, this was enlarged and transformed into the church of Nuestra Señora de Buenos Aires, officially consecrated in 1935. In this church, which is managed by the Mercedarian order, a statue made in Paris that is a faithful copy of the original conserved in Cagliari has been venerated since 1897.⁵⁴ It is not the only one in Buenos Aires: there is another, for example, in a chapel in the cathedral, and a third installed on the seafront in Plaza Cerdeña, donated in the 1970s by the Associazione Sardi Uniti.⁵⁵

All of these cases refer to recent history, to a phase marked not only by the desire to recover the origins of Buenos Aires but also by vast immigrant flows there from Italy. This explains the appearance of several images of the Madonna di Bonaria inspired by that of Cagliari. Everything points to the fact that before the late 19th century the memory of the protectress who had given the city its name had sunk completely into oblivion. This raises a question: was this the case of the capital alone, or did the same thing happen in the rest of Argentina? Responding to this question is the existence of a painting dedicated to the *Virgen del Buen Aire* conserved in the Museo de Bellas Artes in Buenos Aires (Fig. 6). Enrique Valdivieso dated this work to around 1735-1740 and attributed it to the Seville painter Juan de Espinal.⁵⁶ It portrays a splendid Virgin seated on a throne of clouds, with angels and a crescent moon with the horns pointing upwards. With her left hand, she holds the standing Child Jesus, while in her right hand she bears a model ship. A cartouche below clarifies that this is the image venerated in the Palacio de San Telmo in Seville, and, effectively, from an iconographic angle, there can be no doubt about the intention of faithfully reproducing Juan de Oviedo's model.

The painting does not originate from Buenos Aires but from the church of San Francisco in Córdoba. This fact is of the greatest interest, since Córdoba is very far from the sea and at first glance would not appear to have any link with the protector of seafarers. The reason for the painting's presence

54. José Brunet, *Santa María de los Buenos Aires. La Señora que dio nombre a la ciudad*, Buenos Aires, Cuadernos de Buenos Aires, 1980, pp. 29-41.

55. Porrà, *La Madonna di Bonaria*, pp. 8-11.

56. Enrique Valdivieso, "Una pintura inédita de Juan de Espinal en el Museo de Buenos Aires", *Laboratorio de Arte*, 24/2 (2012), pp. 805-807.



Fig. 6. Juan de Espinal (attr.), *Virgen del Buen Aire* (1735-1740), Buenos Aires, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. © Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes.

there can be explained only by further research into the circumstances of its commission. But we should also remember that Córdoba was a very important strategic hub in the network of major trade routes in South America. As mentioned, up to the end of the 18th century, the *Casa de la Contratación* had a monopoly on the control of maritime trade. The galleons leaving Seville sailed chiefly along the official routes of the North Atlantic, which omitted the Argentine coasts since they were too close to the Portuguese territories of Brazil and hence difficult to control. Occasionally, some members of the *Cofradía de Mareantes* would receive royal permission to sail to Buenos Aires in smaller vessels. Nevertheless, the vast bulk of European goods were shipped to the ports of Mexico or Colombia, thence moving on to Peru via the Pacific routes. From Lima, they then crossed the Andes along a route of over 4,000 kilometres to arrive overland in Buenos Aires.⁵⁷ The city of Córdoba lay precisely on this route and, moreover, was also home to a large settlement of the Mercedarian Order.⁵⁸

There is another work that should also be mentioned, even if it is not of the same artistic quality. This is a panel made up of ceramic tiles, generically dated around the 18th century and currently conserved in the Museo Histórico del Norte in the city of Salta, located in north-east Argentina close to the border with Chile (Fig. 7). It shows the Madonna di Bonaria standing upon clouds, holding on her left arm the seated Child bearing the terrestrial globe, and in her right hand what appears to be a model ship together with a rose. She is encircled by a rosary, while in the foreground there is a seascape with several vessels. Unlike the Córdoba image, here there are striking iconographic differences from the Seville statue, and the work seems closer to the Cagliari model, albeit with variants possibly channelled through some engraving. Again, the provenance is not clear, but one should recall that the Mercedarian friars administered numerous settlements in this entire area of Argentina, including an important convent in Salta itself.⁵⁹

In conclusion, I would stress that this chapter is intended simply as an initial approach to a much more ambitious study at the international

57. Torre Revello, *Crónicas del Buenos Aires*, p. 13; *Correspondencia de la Ciudad de Buenos Ayres con los reyes de España. 1588-1615*, Buenos Aires, Municipalidad de Buenos Aires, 1915, pp. 442-449.

58. Brunet, *Santa María de los Buenos Aires*, p. 369.

59. José Brunet, "Los Mercedarios en Santa Fe y en la antigua jurisdicción del Rosario", *Estudios*, 27 (1971), pp. 79-111.



Fig. 7. Anonymous, *Virgen del Buen Ayre* (18th century), Salta, Museo Histórico del Norte.
© Claudio Elias.

level which has been severely conditioned by circumstances due to the coronavirus pandemic. Further research needs to be carried out, especially in the Americas, to trace any other images dating to the modern era and to compile a thorough catalogue of the Madonna di Bonaria. The objective is twofold: on one side, to reflect on the expansion of the cult and the circumstances linking it to maritime disasters and the most common perils of navigation; and, on the other, to analyse the iconographic variants of the Madonna di Bonaria, the mechanisms driving the circulation of the models and what we have called her different “looks”.

MILENA VICECONTE

The Other Hero: Viceroy Monterrey in Literary and Figurative Sources on the 1631 Eruption of Vesuvius*

1. Introduction

Del nostro Duce pur fu tale, et tanto
L'amor, che non curando il manifesto
Rischio di morte, et angoscioso pianto,
Ond'era il tutto per tal rogo infesto:
Soura l'afflitto popol suo cotanto,
Quel Angel raro, EMANUEL fu desto
A dar la vita, a cui fu dato in sorte,
D'haver l'amara inessorabil morte.¹

The lunette frescoed by Battistello Caracciolo for the church of San Martino in Naples is one of the first images that launched the iconographic model of a heroic St Gennaro tackling the fury of Vesuvius during the eruption of December 1631. It was one of the most innovative representations, not least for the ingenious device of portraying the saint in flight in the act of stalling the uncontrollable eruption of lava, ash and lapilli (Fig. 1).² In addition to

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1. Giovanni Battista Camerlenghi, *Incendio di Vesuvio del Camerlenghi* [1632], n.p., p. 119.

2. The lunette painting was part of a fresco cycle illustrating the life and miracles of the saint. See Stefano Causa, *Battistello Caracciolo: l'opera completa*, Naples, Electa Napoli, 2000, pp. 206-207, cat. A124. For an overview of the popular iconography of St Gennaro versus Vesuvius, see Vincenzo Pacelli, "L'iconografia di S. Gennaro dalle origini al Settecento", *Campania Sacra*, 20 (1989), pp. 401-475; Pierluigi Leone de Castris, "San



Fig. 1. Battistello Caracciolo, *St Gennaro Halts the Lava of Vesuvius*, 1631-1632, Naples, Charterhouse of San Martino, Cappella di San Gennaro.

the appearance of the saint, the painter includes in the scene two illustrious witnesses of the miraculous event, portrayed from life and recognisable not only by their physical features but also by the distinctive costumes of their office. These are the Cardinal Archbishop of Naples, Francesco III Boncompagni (1592-1641), and the Count of Monterrey, Manuel de Zúñiga Acevedo y Fonseca (1586-1653), who had been installed as viceroy in May of that year. Many of the accounts published in the aftermath of the disaster describe both men as having been particularly active in managing the emergency generated by the eruption. The archbishop took charge of the spiritual care of the people, summoning them to collective prayer for the entire duration of the disaster and opening churches and chapels for worship even at night. Likewise, the viceroy took upon himself the practical and logistic aspects, supervising a task force to provide aid in the areas directly affected by the eruption and the related seismic tremors.³

In Battistello's fresco, Archbishop Boncompagni is shown close to the baldachin, protecting the reliquary bust of the St Gennaro. He is standing with his back to the observer but with his head turned to a man on his right,

Gennaro e l'arte napoletana", in *San Gennaro tra fede, arte e mito*, exhibition catalogue (Naples, December 1997- April 1998), ed. by Pierluigi Leone de Castris, Naples, Elio de Rosa, 1997, pp. 49-91.

3. Alfonso Tortora, *L'eruzione vesuviana del 1631. Una storia d'età moderna*, Rome, Carocci, 2014.

who can plausibly be identified as the nobleman Giovan Battista Manso, Marquis of Villa.⁴ The viceroy is shown in profile standing to the left of the archbishop, but with his head and upper body slightly turned towards the exterior of the scene; he is looking outwards, almost beckoning the observer into the fresco to witness the miraculous apparition taking place in the sky. The event reputedly occurred on 17 December, when the bust and relics of the martyr saint were carried in procession through the streets of Naples. All of a sudden, the saint appeared flying upon a cloud to tackle the eruptive fury, valiantly repelling the flow of lava with an imperious gesture of his hands and diverting it towards the sea.⁵ The episode, which would soon become one of the most important prodigious tales in the memory of the Neapolitans,⁶ was said to have taken place during the most lethal phase of the eruption, as reported in numerous Vesuvian chronicles. For instance, in the *Distinta relatione* by Michelangelo Masino: “Nello istesso punto fu visto da veri servi d’Iddio San Gennaro in habito pontificio nelle vitriate del domo benedicendo il popolo por lo que è vero che per intercessione di detto Santo protettore si chiari il Monte ritirandosi indietro il fumo”.⁷

Masino does not expressly state that the archbishop and the viceroy took part in the procession, but we know from other accounts that the two most eminent public figures witnessed the extraordinary apparition in first person.⁸ This explains their presence in Battistello’s lunette, where the artist actually exploits it as an expedient both to enhance the emotional engagement of the observer and to confer authenticity on the apparition

4. Francesco Paolo Colucci, “Il cavaliere misterioso della Certosa di San Martino: una proposta per un nuovo ritratto di Giovan Battista Manso marchese di Villa”, *Napoli Nobilissima*, 7/1-1 (January-April 2015), pp. 27-37.

5. Riccardo Lattuada, “Le Vésuve, Naples et la région à l’époque moderne: Éruption volcanique et tremblements de terre”, in *Les catastrophes naturelles dans l’Europe médiévale et moderne*, ed. by Bartolomé Bennassar, Toulouse, Presses Universitaires du Midi, 1996, pp. 95-114: 96. On the importance of the gesture in the relationship between visual communication and devotion, the bibliography is extensive and articulated. For instance, see Ottavia Niccoli, *Vedere con gli occhi del cuore. Alle origini del potere delle immagini*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2011.

6. Francesco Paolo de Ceglia, *Il segreto di san Gennaro. Storia naturale di un miracolo napoletano*, Turin, Einaudi, 2016.

7. Michelangelo Masino, *Distinta relatione dell’incendio del seuo Vesuuio alli 16 di decembre 1631 successo*, Naples, Gio. Domenico Roncagliolo, 1632.

8. Francesco Capecelatro, *Degli annali della Città di Napoli (1631-1640)*, Naples, dalla Tipografia di Reale, 1849, pp. 5-6.

that is taking place. This is also the principal novelty Battistello introduced compared to other coeval images of the 1631 eruption, first and foremost the lunette on the same subject frescoed by Domenichino in the Cappella del Tesoro in the cathedral.⁹

In this lunette, far from being simply another witness, the viceroy appears to be the fulcrum of the visual dialogue set up between the interior and exterior of the scene. This compositional device was quite frequent in historical painting, and was not an isolated case in the figurative production devoted to Vesuvius either. One of the most successful examples can be found in the church of Santa Maria la Nova in Naples, in a scene belonging to the fresco cycle produced by Massimo Stanzione around 1644-1646 for the Cappellone di San Giacomo della Marca.¹⁰ The artist used this expedient to illustrate another prodigious episode that also took place during the dramatic days of the eruption. St Giacomo della Marca was another illustrious heavenly protector of the Neapolitan people¹¹ and, on 19 December, while his incorrupt body was being carried in procession towards the areas struck by the disaster, the eruptive activity suddenly ceased (Fig. 2).¹² Here, again, the

9. In Domenichino's lunette, apart from the upper part in which the apparition of the saint is rendered in a manner similar to that of Battistello, albeit reversed, the earthly scene is occupied by groups of figures being assisted by Franciscan friars. The novel element is the gesture with which the saint blesses the mountain at the height of its eruptive violence, which rapidly became an ideal template for the heroic gesture of the martyr against the forces of nature, setting an iconographic precedent that many artists strove to equal. See Denise Maria Pagano, "Domenichino alla cappella del Tesoro di San Gennaro", in *Domenichino 1581-1641*, Milan, Electa, 1996, pp. 349-367.

10. Sebastian Schütze, "Scene della vita di San Giacomo della Marca", in Sebastian Schütze, Thomas Willette, *Massimo Stanzione: opera completa*, Naples, Electa, 1992, pp. 234-235, cat. A88.

11. See Luigi Abetti, "La 'costruzione' di un culto. Nascita e sviluppo del culto di San Giacomo della Marca", in *Gemma Lucens. Giacomo della Marca tra devozione e santità*, ed. by Fulvia Serpico, Florence, Sismel-Edizioni del Galluzzo, pp. 93-140. For an overview of the patron saints of Naples, and in particular of the promotion in the modern age of St Gennaro and others specialised in protection against calamities, see Elisa Novi Chavarría, Vittoria Fiorelli, "I santi del Vesuvio", in *Alla scoperta del Vesuvio*, exhibition catalog (Ercolano-Naples, 2006), Naples, Electa Napoli, 2006, pp. 69-77.

12. "Al comparire del glorioso Corpo, fuori della città, à vista della nube spaventosa, subito se ne tornò indietro, voltandosi alla marina, lasciando la Città con grande allegrezza e giubilo": *Vera relatione dell'horribil caso et incendio. Occorso per l'esalatione dal Monte di Somma, detto Vessuvio vicino alla Città di Napoli. Da Martedì 16 di dicembre 1631 sino al seguente Martedì 23, del detto mese. Venuta da Napoli con altri particolari saputi per diverse lettere*, Florence, Pietro Nesti al Sole [1632], n.p.



Fig. 2. Massimo Stanzione, *The Body of St Giacomo della Marca Carried in Procession in Naples at the Time of the Eruption of Vesuvius*, 1644-1646, Naples, Church of Santa Maria la Nova, Cappellone di San Giacomo della Marca.

Spanish viceroy, who was present in person at the religious celebration and an eyewitness of the miracle worked by the saint, acts as mediator between the painted scene and the observer, while at the same time confirming that what is shown in the painting actually took place.

An even more effective use of this device was made by Domenico Gargiulo, known as Micco Spadaro (1609-1675), in a painting executed between 1656 and 1660, originating from a private collection and recently acquired by the Certosa and Museo di San Martino.¹³ The miracle portrayed is that already addressed by Battistello, namely the interruption of eruptive

13. Roberto Pane, "La processione del 1631 per l'eruzione del Vesuvio, in un quadro di Micco Spadaro", in *Seicento napoletano: arte, costume e ambiente*, ed. by Roberto Pane, Milan, Edizioni di Comunità, 1984, pp. 515-517; *Micco Spadaro a San Martino: una nuova acquisizione*, ed. by Fernanda Capobianco and Rita Pastorelli, Naples, Arte'm, 2016.

activity on 17 December through the intervention of St Gennaro. This time, however, the scene is shown from a raised bird's eye view over the clearing outside Porta Capuana. The different angle allowed the artist to theatrically frame the swarming multitude of citizens that thronged to the procession. Once again, the viceroy is the only person to fix his gaze on the observer, despite being totally immersed in the dense human mass, engaged along with other dignitaries and Archbishop Boncompagni in escorting the baldachin protecting the relics of the martyr. The crowd has gathered to witness the redemptive intervention of St Gennaro, who duly appears intrepidly in the upper part of the composition. Here, too, recourse is made to the by then codified formula of the saint portrayed anachronistically as a superhero challenging the destructive violence of the volcano.¹⁴

The pictorial examples mentioned so far suggest that the Count of Monterrey occupied a somewhat secondary role during the terrible days of the eruption. The main subject of these images is the prodigious phenomenon that, in effect, put an end to the disaster, and the viceroy's presence appears to be functional solely to recording his participation as an example of devotion during the occasions of collective prayer. However, this observation is called into question by the figurative sources consisting of engravings, where the viceroy is presented in his official role as the person appointed to govern the kingdom and, consequently, as the principal figure in the management of the emergency caused by the catastrophe.

2. *The other hero: the viceroy*

In the weeks following the eruption, dozens of *avvisi* and *ragguagli* on the tragic calamity were produced and circulated from the principal Naples printing works. These pamphlets contained more or less detailed information about the explosions of the volcano and the related seismic movements, as well as the general state of fear and confusion among the Neapolitans in the face of this natural upheaval.¹⁵ Among the accounts,

14. For this felicitous comparison, see Haraldur Sigurdsson, *Melting the Earth: The History of Ideas on Volcanic Eruptions*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 98.

15. Gennaro Schiano, *Relatar la catástrofe en el Siglo de Oro. Entre noticia y narración*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2021, pp. 107-137. For a general overview of printed news on disasters in Naples in the 17th century, see Domenico Cecere, "Informare e stupire. Racconti di calamità nella Napoli del XVII secolo", in *L'Europa moderna e l'antico Vesuvio*.

those of an official character contain explicit references to the initiatives taken by the viceroy to address the emergency, which were obviously seen in an extremely positive light.¹⁶ The publications in question, written in both Italian and Spanish, are actually quite varied in terms of type and genre. In addition to the dedications celebrating the deeds of the viceroy, some of them also include interesting paratextual elements at the beginning, such as the heraldic crest of the Count of Monterrey or a portrait of him in official dress, which visually reinforce the propagandist import of the publication. Obviously, in these texts St Gennaro is always mentioned and celebrated as the heavenly hero of the disaster; nevertheless, reference to the celestial input goes hand in hand with the expression of profound esteem and gratitude towards the viceroy, at times also accompanied by words of praise for the archbishop.

Among the most interesting printed works including illustrations, we must mention the *Incendio di Vesuvio* by Giovanni Battista Camerlenghi (Fig. 3).¹⁷ This is a remarkable composition in *ottava rima* dedicated to the viceroy, with a fine title page attributed to the French engraver Nicolas Perrey (1596-1661).¹⁸ Here, the celebratory aspect

Sull'identità scientifica italiana tra i secoli XVII e XVIII. Atti del Seminario internazionale di Studi (Fisciano 15 settembre 2015), ed. by Alfonso Tortora, Domenico Cassano and Sean Cocco, Battipaglia, Lavegliacarlone, 2017, pp. 63-77.

16. "Atendia a todas partes la vigilancia del Excelentissimo Conde de Monterrei, que gobernaba el Reino con aplausos, i socorria con obras", Fernando [Isaac] Cardoso, *Discurso sobre el monte Vesuvio, insigne por sus ruinas, famoso por la muerte de Plinio: del prodigioso incendio del año pasado de 1631 i de sus causas naturales, i el origen verdadero de los terremotos, vientos, i tempestades*, Madrid, por Francisco Martínez, 1632, p. 9. More representative texts are indicated in the following remarks. See Laura Rodríguez Fernández, "La catástrofe del Vesubio de 1631 y sus repercusiones en el ámbito editorial hispánico contemporáneo", *Annali dell'Università degli Studi di Napoli l'Orientale, Sezione Romanza*, 54/1 (2012), pp. 97-121.

17. Camerlenghi, *Incendio di Vesuvio*.

18. Nicolas Perrey was born in Salins in Burgundy and is documented in Rome around 1613 and then in Naples from 1616-1617, where he lived up to his death and where almost all of his abundant graphic production is concentrated. He was an attentive witness of many of the crucial events in Neapolitan history, including numerous catastrophes, and is considered a key figure for an understanding of the genesis of the 17th-century image of Vesuvius in print. For a biographical profile, see: Francesco Lofano, "L'eruzione del Vesuvio del 1631 e Nicolas Perrey. Novità e riflessioni sul percorso di un malnoto pittore", in *Napoli e il Gigante. Il Vesuvio tra immagine, scrittura e memoria*, ed. by Rosa Casapullo and Lorenza Gianfrancesco, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2014, pp. 209-235; Ana Minguito Palomares,



Fig. 3. Nicolas Perrey, title page of the work by Giovanni Battista Camerlenghi [1632], *Incendio di Vesuvio del Camerlenghi*, s.l., s.n. Exemplar consulted: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 4 Phys.sp. 209 r.

dominates decisively over the descriptive: two-thirds of the page are in fact occupied by the large coat of arms of the Zúñiga-Fonseca dynasty, flanked by two pairs of allegorical figures who can be recognised by their attributes. These personify the virtuous qualities of the dedicatee: Strength and Justice to the left, Prudence and Temperance to the right. The scene is symbolically completed by a fifth figure at the top personifying Fame. The calamitous event is instead relegated to the lower part of the page, which shows a somewhat simplified image of the legendary double cone of the volcano, seen frontally from the sea, as was customary.¹⁹

The intentional celebration of the Spanish nobleman that can be discerned in the title page continues on the following page with one of the most famous portraits of the count signed by Perrey.²⁰ This shows close stylistic affinities with a slightly earlier version, again by Perrey, produced for the chronicle *Descrittione dell'apparato fatto nella festa di S. Giovanni*, written by Gianbernardino Giuliani.²¹ The portrait published in Camerlenghi's work reveals several compositional variations, such as the square rather than oval frame, the official dress instead of armour, and the inclusion of the key alluding to the rank of *gentilhombre de cámara* (Gentleman of the Bedchamber). It also features an interesting Latin couplet which seems to express in words what is visually represented on

“Nicolás Perrey y el uso del grabado en la construcción de la imagen del virreinato de Nápoles durante el siglo XVII. Compendio y documentación de nuevas obras”, *Janus*, 9 (2020), pp. 221-274; Vincenzo Palmisciano, “Sulla biografia dell’incisore Nicolas Perrey (con novità su Orazio Colombo)”, *Studi secenteschi*, 61, (2020), pp. 298-304.

19. On the iconic representation of the smouldering Vesuvius, see the observations of Elisa Castorina, “*Vesuvi ardenti*”: *la ricezione poetica dell'eruzione del 1631 nella letteratura barocca*, PhD dissertation, Naples, Università di Napoli Federico II, 2008, pp. 518-538.

20. On the graphic, painted and sculptural portraits of the Count of Monterrey, see Ángel Rivas Albaladejo, *Entre Madrid, Roma y Nápoles. El VI conde de Monterrey y el gobierno de la Monarquía Hispánica (1621-1653)*, PhD dissertation, Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona, 2015, pp. 358-360, 389-390, 397-399, 543, 549-555, 577-578.

21. Gianbernardino Giuliani, *Descrittione dell'apparato fatto nella festa di S. Giovanni dal fedelissimo popolo napolitano*, Naples, Domenico Maccarano, 1631. In 2014, Francesco Lofano hypothesised the derivation of this portrait from a painted version still to be traced (Lofano, “L'eruzione del Vesuvio”, p. 221). Based on the corpus of portraits of Monterrey, the reference model for this one, and for the other versions engraved by Perrey, must be that made by Diego Velázquez during his sojourn in Rome, as proposed here. This portrait, now lost, is known through a copy belonging to the Marquis of Leganés; it, too, was long considered lost but recently resurfaced on the Madrid antiques market (*Durán Arte y Subastas*, Subasta 579, 19 December 2019, lot 58).

the title page: *Arsit atrox ignis, decrevit in ima Vesevus / Arsit Amor, sed Mons erevit in astra tuus*. Here the viceroy and the volcano are placed in a distinct, but inversely proportionate, relationship: as Vesuvius declines, the glory of the count is destined to rise.

As noted, this propaganda-type editorial production was intended to give visibility to the swift action the viceroy took in the earliest months of his mandate. At the same time, it also met the urgent need to counter the rumours that were circulating in Naples suggesting that the earthquake was to be read as a sign of the anger of God and of St Gennaro, aroused by the deplorable conduct of the vice-regal government.²² The authors of these *relazioni* therefore took pains to consistently stress the estimable spirituality professed by Manuel de Zúñiga, as demonstrated by his assiduous attendance at the occasions of collective prayer coordinated by Archbishop Boncompagni. These started with the procession convened by the archbishop on 16 December just a few hours after the start of the catastrophe, as mentioned in the chronicle *Los incendios de la montaña de Soma*, the author of which is unspecified but tends to be identified by critics as the intellectual Francisco de Alegría.²³ The account also refers to the viceroy's poor state of health during the terrible days of the eruption, stressing how this had in no manner prevented him from attending the religious services.²⁴ This aspect was also pointed out by other contemporaries, such as Gianbernardino Giuliani, who wrote:

22. Tortora, *L'eruzione vesuviana*; Lorenza Gianfrancesco, "Vesuvio e società: informazione, propaganda e dibattito intellettuale a Napoli nel primo Seicento", in *Napoli e il Gigante*, pp. 55-91; Lorenza Gianfrancesco, "Narrative and Representation of a Disaster in Early Seventeenth-Century Naples", in *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture*, ed. by Domenico Cecere, Chiara De Caprio, Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Pasquale Palmieri, Rome, Viella, 2018, pp. 163-186.

23. Francisco de Alegría, *Los incendios de la montaña de Soma*, Naples, Egidio Longo, 1632. See also Laura Rodríguez Fernández, *El Vesubio en llamas: un texto napolitano en español sobre la erupción de 1631. Los incendios de la montaña de Soma (Nápoles, 1632)*, Naples, Tullio Pironti, 2014.

24. Rodríguez Fernández, *El Vesubio en llamas*, p. 157. See also what is recorded in the *Relacion de los socorros de gente, y dinero con que el excellentissimo senor conde de Monterey a asistido a diferentes partes* [1636], n.p., presumably published in Naples in 1636 on the viceroy's own initiative, the content of which is also literally cited in the diary of the ceremonies of the Palazzo Reale compiled by Jusepe Renao. See Ángel Rivas Albaladejo, "Jusepe Renao e la Napoli vicereale del Seicento. Portieri di camera e maestri di cerimonie", in *Cerimoniale del Vicereame Spagnolo di Napoli 1535-1637*, ed. by Attilio Antonelli, Naples, Art'm, 2019, pp. 45-73: 53-54.

Il Signor Viceré non volle giamai, col suo magnanimo, et intrepido cuore, abbandonare in una così grande, et universal paura, il suo Palazzo reale, benche da molti istigato grandemente ne fosse: anzi tenne mai sempre à tutte l'hore di giorno, e di notte le porte aperte à chiunque voleva seco trattare ò sopra i bisogni correnti dell'Incendio [...] ancora che talvolta egli se ne stesse à letto, cagionevole della persona.²⁵

However, the most striking aspect that emerges from a reading of these accounts relates to certain practical measures ordered by the “provident” viceroy that are also illustrated in some of the coeval graphic production. Immediately after the first violent quakes, the viceroy ordered *Deputati della Salute* to be sent to the places directly affected by the explosions to make an initial assessment of the situation and to avert the danger of epidemic arising from the “fetide materie” spouted forth by the volcano along with ashes and lapilli.²⁶ This first reconnaissance was followed by a second, presided over by three Spanish officials who were sent respectively to the areas of Pozzuoli, Capua and Somma.²⁷ Once the viceroy had grasped the level of criticality in the various territories, he decided to concentrate the aid operations in the areas worst hit at the foot of the volcano. These procedures involved both the homeless who had crossed the Maddalena bridge and who sought to reach the capital on foot, and those who had been overcome by panic and who had attempted to escape by sea. For the latter, a key element in the operations aimed at saving the survivors were the two viceregal galleys fitted out to serve as hospital ships that were sent from Naples: “Il Vice Rè hà mandato le galere per salvare alcuni, che stavano nudi sopra gli scogli, e come vedevano venire il fuoco si buttavano in mare, e ne sono morti molti”.²⁸

25. Gianbernardino Giuliani, *Trattato del Monte Vesuvio e de' suoi incendi*, Naples, Egidio Longo, 1632, p. 81.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-69, 74-75.

27. Antonio Bulifon, *Giornali di Napoli dal 1547 al 1706*, ed. by Nino Cortese, Naples, Società Napoletana di Storia Patria, 1932, pp. 152-153.

28. *Vera relatione dell'horribil caso*, n.p. On the sending of the galleys, see, in particular: Giovanni Orlandi, *Nuoua, e compita relatione del spaunteuole incendio del Monte di Somma detto il Vesuuio. Doue s'intende minutamente tutto quello che e successo fin'al presente giorno, con la nota di quante volte detto Monte si sia abbrugiato*, Naples, Lazzaro Scoriggio, 1632, p. 15; Padre Agostiniano Capradosso, *Il lagrimevole auenimento dell'incendio del monte Vesuvio per la Città di Napoli*, Naples, Egidio Longo, 1631, n.p.; Simon de Ayala, *Copiosissima y verdadera relacion del incendio del monte Vesuvio [...]*, Naples, Ottavio Beltrano, 1632, n.p.

The importance given to the measures taken by the Count of Monterrey, and in particular to the galleys sent to the places overwhelmed by the disaster, again reflects the propagandist intention of these accounts. They were designed to set the spotlight on the diligence of the viceroy who, despite being distant from the epicentre of the disaster, reacted decisively to the state of emergency that threatened the kingdom and its inhabitants. The official reporter Favella compared the viceroy to the Emperor Titus – who had heroically addressed the other great eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE – and he appeared to have all the credentials to embody the virtues of the earthly hero of the disaster.²⁹ In actual fact, the eulogies of the count so clearly enshrined in the accounts considered so far were matched in other coeval publications, in particular in a series of poems, including *ottava rima*, and prose compositions echoing such praise of the commendable conduct of the Spanish nobleman in these critical circumstances.³⁰

Returning to the figurative documents, the vast iconographic repertory concerning the 1631 eruption of Vesuvius does not appear to include any specific formulation of the viceroy in action. In fact, there are hardly any images portraying his contribution to resolving the calamity. The artists' attention was mostly focused on the figure of St Gennaro, the true hero of the event, who was capable of directly tackling the forces of nature represented by the flaming mountain. The only exception to this trend is in the sphere of graphic production, more specifically in a portrayal of the Vesuvian landscape produced through chalcography. Judging by the replicas that have survived, such illustrations were apparently very popular not only in Naples but also in Spain.

In the current state of knowledge, the identification of the *editio princeps* continues to be very problematic, as is the identification of the author, so that all the known versions have to be considered on par. Based on what is stated in the respective captions, the aim was to provide a “true drawing” or

29. Giovanni Geronimo Favella, *Abbozzo delle ruine fatte dal monte di Somma con il seguito insino ad hoggi 23 di gennaio 1632*, Naples, Secondino Roncaglio, 1632. See also Gianfrancesco, “Narrative and Representation”, pp. 174-175; Camerlenghi, *Incendio di Vesuvio*, p. 120.

30. Laura Rodríguez Fernández, “La erupción del Vesubio de 1631 en la imprenta napolitana en lengua castellana: Los incendios de la montaña de Soma (Nápoles, Egidio Longo, 1632)”, in *Lingua spagnola e cultura ispanica a Napoli fra Rinascimento e barocco: testimonianze a stampa Materia hispanica*, ed. by Encarnación Sánchez García, Naples, Tullio Pironti, 2013, pp. 223-239: 232-233.

a “true portrait” of the Vesuvian conflagration and the damage it had caused. The surviving exemplars are all basically the same size (c. 22 x 32 cm) and are all on single sheets rather than part of a more structured book production. They feature a chorographic view of the Vesuvian landscape taken from the west, where most of the space is occupied by the double cone shown in the eruptive phase. Various groups of buildings in the immediate vicinity are depicted, corresponding to the places that were overwhelmed by the lava. A key is inserted in the right margin of the image to facilitate identification, with textual elements positioned close to the buildings for the same purpose. For instance, the indication of the church of Santa Maria del Soccorso, the only site spared by the lava flow (“miracolosamente si fermò il fuoco che veneva verso Napoli, et in detta chiesa si salvarono da cento persone”).

In addition to this information, sometimes the names of the engraver/printer or dedicatee also appear. Although there is no reference to the place of printing, this can reasonably be assumed to be one of the principal printing works in Naples – or Rome – that were specialised in the production of texts and images on the subject of disasters. As regards the execution, despite some slight variations – for instance, in the graphic rendering of the lava flows, the clouds of smoke, the waves in the sea or the drawing of the buildings – the various exemplars can be traced to a single prototype which, as mentioned, remains to be identified.

Apropos the author, he would appear to have been abreast of the perspective innovations employed in the various Vesuvian landscapes produced over time by the aforementioned Nicolas Perrey, such as the one with St Gennaro that accompanied the *Epistola isagogica* by Gregorio Carafa³¹ and the pair of engravings illustrating the volcano before and after the eruption,³² published first in the *Trattato del Monte Vesuvio e de'suoi incendi* by Giamberardino Giuliani³³ and later in the *De incendio Vesuuii*

31. Gregorio Carafa, *In opusculum de novissima Vesuvii conflagratione, epistola isagogica*, Naples, Egidio Longo, 1632. The image of the crest of the Theatine Order crowned by three putti that appears in the frontispiece is also by Perrey.

32. This iconographic formula has been addressed by Vera Fionie Koppenleitner, *Katastrophenbilder: der Vesuvausbruch 1631 in den Bildkünsten der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin, Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2018, pp. 53-57, 84-91.

33. Giuliani, *Trattato del Monte Vesuvio*. In this case, too, Nicolas Perrey was responsible not only for these two engravings but also for the title page showing the crest of the Count-Duke of Olivares crowned by three putti.

excitato by Giovanni Battista Mascolo.³⁴ In addition to these prints, which are frequently cited in coeval sources for the naturalistic rendering that was the result of direct observation, it is known that the artist produced at least one other pair of before and after Vesuvian landscapes that were even more finely worked than those made for Giuliani's treatise and that were framed from a raised viewpoint.³⁵

Of the variants identified to date, the one that boasts the largest number of surviving copies, suggesting that it may have enjoyed a broader circulation than others, can be identified by the caption running along the lower edge of the image: *Vero disegno dell'incendio nella Montagna di Somma altrimenti detto Mons Vesuvii distante da Napoli sei miglia, a 16 di dicembre* (Fig. 4).³⁶ At top right is an inscription that reveals the interest that was taken in Rome in the tragic events caused by the eruption. It reads: "Al Molto Ill. Sig.re il Sig.r Angelo Saluzzo mio Patrone Colendissimo / Gio. Battista Passero D.D.", where the initials D.D. (*donat et dicat*) allude to the gift made to Father Angelo Saluzzi, an Oratorian resident in Rome, by the artist Giovan Battista Passeri (1610-1679), the author and owner of the plate.³⁷

There is a variant of this *Vero disegno* bearing the dedication "Al M.to Ill.mo Sign.r il Sign.r Francesco Popoleschi Gentilomo fiorentino /

34. Giovanni Battista Mascolo, *De incendio Vesuuii excitato 17. Kal. Ianuar. Anno trigesimo primo saeculi decimiseptimi*, Naples, Secondino, Roncagliolo, 1633.

35. Bibliothèque Nationale de France (henceforth BNF) [GE DD-2987 (5583) and GE BB-246 (XIV, 54)]. Both have, in the lower section, a Latin poem dedicated to Vesuvius, probably to be referred to an author identified only as Lorenzo Longo of the Congregation of the Somascan Fathers, whose name appears in the after version of the eruption.

36. To date, five exemplars of this print have been identified: Museo di San Martino, Archivio Disegni e Stampe, fondo brogi, stipo 5, cartella 19; Biblioteca della Società Napoletana di Storia Patria (henceforth NSNP); BNF, GE DD-2987 (5582); Bibliothèques du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Collection iconographique de la datation Krafft, IC KR 20; Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, ALB Vues 07811. A sixth, watercoloured, exemplar has been identified in the BNF by Emanuela Guidoboni, "Vesuvius: A Historical Approach to the 1631 Eruption: 'Cold Data' from the Analysis of Three Contemporary Treatises", *Journal of Volcanology and Geothermal Research*, 178/3 (2008), pp. 347-358: 355, Fig. 2. It has also been published by Lina Scalisi in *Per riparar l'incendio. Le politiche dell'emergenza dal Perù al Mediterraneo. Huaynaputina 1600 - Vesuvio 1631 - Etna 1669*, Catania, Domenico Sanfilippo Editore, 2013, Fig. 8.

37. This information is derived from the signature "Gio. Battista Passaru Formis Neap." in the lower right-hand corner of the sheet. On Angelo Saluzzi (1566-1654), again see Koppenleitner, *Katastrophenbilder*, p. 70.



Fig. 4. Giovan Battista Passeri, *View of the Bay of Naples with Vesuvius in Eruption*, c. 1632. Exemplar consulted: Vienna, Osterreichische Nationalbibliothek, ALB Vues 07811.

Gio. Orlandi D.D.D.”³⁸ This version was produced by the printer Giovanni Orlandi, active between Rome and Naples in the first half of the 17th century.³⁹ It includes, at top right, a bust of St Gennaro appearing aloft on a cloud in the act of blessing the volcano.⁴⁰

Also to be referred to Orlandi is a further variant entitled *VERO RITRATTO DELL’INCENDIO [...]* (Fig. 5).⁴¹ Here, the same image of the eruption – in a more schematic but equally effective rendering – accompanies a manuscript

38. BNF, GE DD-655 (104RES). There are no further details available on the “gentleman” Popoleschi.

39. Anna Omodeo, *Grafica napoletana del ‘600. Fabricatori di immagini: saggio sugli incisori, illustratori, stampatori e librai della Napoli del Seicento*, Naples, Regina, 1981, p. 16; Paola Carla Verde, “L’Iconografia asservita al potere. L’opera e i committenti dell’incisore e topografo Alessandro Baratta alla corte vicerale di Napoli nella prima metà del XVII secolo”, *Librosdelacorte.es*, 13/8 (2016); Koppenleitner, *Katastrophenbilder*, pp. 62-72.

40. This element may have been inspired by Perrey’s invention for Carafa’s treatise.

41. *VERO RITRATTO DELL’INCENDIO DELLA MONTAGNA DI SOMMA. ALTRIMENTE detto Mons Vesuui, distante da Napoli sei miglia, successo alli 16 Xmbre 1631*. Naples, SNSP, SISMICA, Atlanti 018 (2). The cited fascicle contains two newssheets published in the Germanic area, one of which follows the *mise en page* of this sheet while reworking the scene in a more expressive manner. My thanks to Annachiara Monaco for having pointed this out.

copy of the letter from the printer to Nicolò Enriquez de Herrera, apostolic nuncio in Naples from 1630 to 1636, which he had published in another sheet titled *Miserando successo e spaventevole occorso nelli 16 di Xbre nel monte Vesevo detto Soma*.⁴²

The composition featured in the variants presented here also enjoyed success outside Italy, particularly in Spain. This is confirmed by the image contained in the compendium *El monte Vesuvio, aora la montaña de Soma*, published in Madrid in 1632.⁴³ As the author Juan de Quiñones explains in the introduction, this work is a compilation of manuscript and printed sources originating from Naples and translated from Italian into Spanish. Here, the chalcography is inserted in the text where it serves as a useful visual supplement, illustrating to the Spanish reader the context in which the disaster took place. Obviously, the key and the textual elements of the image are translated into Spanish, as is the long caption at the bottom of the sheet – *Verdadero retrato del Incendio de la montaña de Soma llamada antiguamente el monte Vesuvio distante de Nap.^s dos leguas* – completed by the author’s dedication to the monarch, Philip IV (Fig. 6). Also inserted in the lower right margin is the signature of the engraver, Jean de Courbes, a prolific French *escultor de láminas* active in Spain from 1620.⁴⁴

The particular interest of the prints of the drawing/portrait described in this rapid overview is the inclusion of several elements conceived – albeit symbolically – to give visibility to the viceroy’s authority, namely, the galleys sent from Naples to assist the victims that were so frequently mentioned in the printed reports. The vessels are positioned in the sea, one behind the other, and appear to be heading towards the coast. A short note is added to facilitate identification of the ships: “Due galere che andarono a pigliare li genti rimasti vivi” (in Spanish in the version engraved by De Courbes). This detail is completely missing from the

42. Paolo Gasparini, Silvana Musella, *Un viaggio al Vesuvio. Il Vesuvio visto attraverso diari, lettere e resoconti di viaggiatori*, Naples, Liguori Editore, 1991, pp. 282, 410.

43. Juan de Quiñones, *El monte Vesuvio, aora la montaña de Soma*, Madrid, Juan González, 1632.

44. José Manuel Matilla, *La estampa en el libro barroco. Juan de Courbes*, Vitoria-Gasteiz-Madrid, Instituto Municipal de Estudios Iconográficos Ephialte-Calcografía Nacional, 1991; *Grabadores extranjeros en la Corte española del Barroco*, ed. by Javier Blas, María Cruz de Carlos Varona and José Manuel Matilla, Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España-Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2011, p. 26.

other words, the idea is to represent the crucial and timely involvement of viceregal power in the aid operations: the vital initiative was launched at the very moment when the people affected by the explosions and the mudslides risked being isolated by the lava flowing relentlessly from the mountain to the sea, in effect blocking all possible ways of escape.

In view of this intention, it cannot be ruled out that Viceroy Monterrey himself may even have been behind the choice of this composition with its dense political significance, perhaps in the conviction that immortalising the heroic salvage operations carried out by the viceregal vessels would be bound to boost the popularity of viceregal authority. If this were the case, these prints would have to be seen as an evident continuation of the intent revealed in the official printed *avvisi* and in other propaganda initiatives such as those which, making use of materials much more lasting than paper, were to leave an indelible trace of the viceroy's heroic gestures in the memory of the inhabitants of the area of Vesuvius.

3. Recollection of the event: the viceroy as commissioner of the Vesuvian memorials

The end of the catastrophe ushered in a period of intensive reconstruction in the areas where the violence of the eruption had destroyed houses and palaces and seriously jeopardised communication routes. Sites of worship were also restored and equipped with new images of Our Lady, and especially of St Gennaro, who was from that time on seen as the celestial agent most efficacious against all species of calamity, and particularly against the eruptive phenomena that were to continue to threaten the territory for many decades. Effigies of the saint sculpted in stone or modelled in terracotta also began to be erected in the open air, generally positioned facing Vesuvius and showing Gennaro either blessing or repelling the infernal mountain.

In this context of general recovery and of new stimulus for civic religiosity, the viceregal authority too wished to leave a tangible reminder of the disaster through an initiative that displayed intentions of both strong commemorative value and self-aggrandisement. Manuel de Zúñiga duly erected two monumental memorials in the towns of Portici and Torre del Greco (1635-1636), which curious travellers can still see today. Both of these installations were part of a larger campaign conceived to celebrate

his person and his actions as viceroy, which also involved the capital of the kingdom through a series of commissions for urban decor.⁴⁷

The Portici monument consists of an austere marble slab, located at what is now the intersection between Corso Garibaldi and Via Gianturco, bearing a Latin inscription that goes beyond exhorting posterity to defending itself against the danger of the nearby volcano. Indeed, after a series of recommendations to take rapidly to one's heels in the event of eruption, it also recalls the importance of the humanitarian aid provided at the time by Viceroy Monterrey. A similar eulogy of the greatheartedness of the viceroy emerges in the Torre del Greco memorial, incorporated into a monument that includes an older plaque erected in what is now Via Nazionale.⁴⁸ This decidedly more impressive monument consists of a large panel of lava stone 21 metres tall containing within three coats of arms and the two marble memorials. The spolia plaque dates to 1562, the year in which it was erected by the then viceroy, Pedro Afán de Ribera, Duke of Alcalá (1559-1571), to mark the opening of the Strada Regia. After being buried beneath the mud flows during the eruption of 1631, it was then retrieved and incorporated into the new monument, illustrating the Count of Monterrey's desire to similarly honour the initiative of his predecessor in the previous century. This intention is reinforced by the presence of the coats of arms of the two viceroys, set alongside each other and surmounted by two obelisks in lava stone, in the centre of which are the magnificent royal arms of the monarch, Philip IV.

News of the erection of these memorials was not circumscribed to the places directly involved in the initiative and must have been given considerable coverage through transcriptions included in the guides and in the biographies of Monterrey. It is, for instance, mentioned in the *Teatro eroico* by the biographer Domenico Antonio Parrino, a

47. Katrin Zimmermann, "Il viceré VI conte di Monterrey. Mecenate e committente a Napoli (1631-1637)", in *España y Nápoles: coleccionismo y mecenazgo virreinales en el siglo XVII*, ed. by José Luis Colomer, Madrid, Centro de Estudios Europa Hispánica, 2009, pp. 277-292: 287.

48. "EMMANUEL FONSECA ET ZUNICA COM.MONT.REG.PROR. / QUA ANIMI MAGNITUDE PUBLICAE CALAMITATI / E A PRIVATAE CONSULUIT / EXTRACTUM FUNDITUS GENTILIS SUI LAPIDEM / COELO RESTITUIT VIAM REASTAURAVIT / FUMANTE ADHUC ET INDIGNANTE VESEVO". See Giovanni P. Ricciardi, *Diario del monte Vesuvio. Venti secoli di immagini e cronache di un vulcano nella città*, 3 vols, vol. II, Naples, Edizioni scientifiche e artistiche, 2009, pp. 253-254.

work that circulated widely even beyond the borders of the kingdom and that was certainly instrumental in informing a broad public of the viceroy's prompt and brave action in addressing the terrible disaster.⁴⁹ Shortly before Parrino, the chronicler Pompeo Sarnelli also provided a description in of his famous *Guida de' forestieri*,⁵⁰ which includes, in the 1685 edition, an illustration by Antonio Bulifon showing the Portici memorial (Fig. 7) published alongside a small image of Vesuvius by Giovanna Dorotea Pesche. The plaque occupies almost half the surface of the page, set within a landscape view that is easily recognisable by the double cone of Vesuvius in the background and the by then customary pinnacle of smoke. In the left foreground are three figures, most probably two visitors and a guide who, pointing at the inscription, is telling them about the events recorded in the memorial.⁵¹

4. Conclusion

A consideration of the examples examined suggests some concluding remarks that cast new light on the heroic portrayal of the viceroy linked to the 1631 eruption of Vesuvius. It is clear that, in the figurative sphere, the need to portray the Count of Monterrey as the prime mover in the management of the emergency is expressed mostly in printed compositions. The most conspicuous case is that of the chorographic view of Vesuvius, known in various editions, where the presence of viceregal authority is

49. Domenico Antonio Parrino, *Teatro eroico, e politico de' governi de' Viceré del Regno di Napoli dal tempo del Re Ferdinando il Cattolico fino al presente*, 3 vols, vol. II, Naples, Parrino & Mutii, 1692-1694, pp. 221-224. In addition to the memorials of Portici and Torre del Greco, further on (p. 254) the author records and describes a third situated on the road to Poggio Reale, which recalls that Monterrey was also responsible for the reclamation of this area after the eruption.

50. Pompeo Sarnelli, *Guida de' forestieri: curiosi di vedere, e d'intendere le cose più notabili della regal città di Napoli, e del suo amenissimo distretto*, Naples, Giuseppe Roselli, 1685, pp. 401-402.

51. Another picturesque image of the Portici memorial can be found in the view by Paolo Petrini datable to around the turn of the century and then reprinted in Gaetano D'Amato, *Divisamento critico sulle correnti opinioni intorno a fenomeni del Vesuvio [...]*, Naples, Stamperia Abbaziana, 1756. See also Lucio Fino, *Vesuvio e Campi Flegrei. Due miti del grand tour nella grafica di tre secoli. Stampe disegni e acquerelli dal 1540 al 1876*, Naples, Grimaldi, 1993, p. 69.



Fig. 7. Antonio Bulifon, illustration for the work by Pompeo Sarnelli (1685), *Guida de forestieri: curiosi di vedere, e d'intendere le cose più notabili della regal città di Napoli, e del suo amenissimo distretto*, Naples, Giuseppe Roselli. Exemplar consulted: Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale Vittorio Emanuele III, RAC.NOT. B 1076.

symbolically represented by the official galleys sent to provide immediate aid to the places directly threatened by the eruption. These images are to be read in continuity with the production of *avvisi* and reports in which the viceroy is eulogised, not only for his profound devotion, but also for his exceptionally decisive response to the emergency.

On the other hand, this vision of Monterrey as the earthly hero of the disaster does not appear in the pictorial production, which seems to be markedly more inclined to frame the narration in a sacred dimension. The purpose of this is to set off the figure of St Gennaro who, as an intermediary between earth and heaven, is shown interacting directly with the volcano. In the codification of a specific iconography that pits the saint against Vesuvius, the figure of the viceroy – where included – appears to be relegated to the role of a mere eyewitness of the prodigious event, alongside the other authoritative earthly presence evoked in such representations: that of the Archbishop of Naples, Francesco Boncompagni.

III

Management and Communication

BEATRIZ ÁLVAREZ GARCÍA

Pro serenitate Public Prayers During the Floods
of the Guadalquivir in the 17th Century:
A Study Using *Relaciones de Sucesos*

1. *Floods in Seville during the 17th century: a public order problem
and the emergence of a flood management culture*

In 1684, a *relación de sucesos* printed in Madrid reported the following news from Seville:

Amigo y señor mío, no puedo dejar de participar a v.m. las calamidades y trabajos que Dios ha sido servido de embiarnos, assí en esta Ciudad, como en toda la Andaluzía, causados de las continuas y repetidas aguas por el discurso de tres meses, que en esta Ciudad creímos quería la Magestad de Dios con otro general diluvio, en pena de nuestros graves pecados, assolarnos.¹

The author made reference to the important floods that the city of Seville suffered that year. The fact is that, in the early modern era, the population of Seville had to deal with many floods that affected the city's social, political, cultural, religious and, of course, economic life, as the hub of trade with the Indies. This unique characteristic turned the floods in Seville into a major problem, in political and economic terms as well as from a health perspective. Over time, it characterised and modified the

1. Abbreviations used: Biblioteca da Ajuda [BA], Biblioteca Nacional de España [BNE], English Short Title Catalogue [ESTC], Herzog August Bibliothek [HAB]. BNE, VE/100/15, "Relación verdadera y copia de carta escrita por un Cavallero de Sevilla a un amigo suyo en esta Corte, en que le dà quenta de la inundación que ha padecido esta Ciudad este Invierno, por discurso de tres meses, los Conventos, e Iglesias que se han anegado, y caído; casas, y gente que ha perecido, y la forma con que han sido socorridos con barcos que andavan por las calles, a los que no podían salir de sus casas; y de la Processión que su Ilustre Cabildo hizo a la Santa Iglesia Mayor para pedir a Dios cessasse su enojo, con otras particularidades sucedidas este año de 1684", Madrid, 1684.

relationship between the city and its river, which was simultaneously a source of wealth and destruction.

The period known as the Little Ice Age, which lasted between approximately 1550 and 1850, was a phase of climatic cooling that manifested in strong meteorological variability. One of the most characteristic expressions of this period was the increase in the frequency of torrential rain, which was reflected in an increase in catastrophic flooding, as the rain was also often accompanied by long periods of drought. In the case of the Iberian Peninsula, the most important intervals of rainfall occurred between 1580 and 1620 and between 1840 and 1870.² The Guadalquivir basin, together with certain parts of the Duero basin and the Levante, were those that suffered the most intense effects of these floods throughout the 17th century. During that time, floods occurred with a frequency of at least one per decade, as shown by the historical flood distribution series created by Benito, Machado and Pérez-González.³ As a result, the city of Seville suffered these events with notorious severity due to its particular geographical position, which was very beneficial from a commercial point of view, but vulnerable in climatic terms. It was not the only locality affected: Cordoba and Écija, on the upper course of the Guadalquivir, also felt the effects of the floods.⁴

2. Mariano Barriendos, Javier Martín Vide, “Secular Climatic Oscillations as Indicated by Catastrophic Floods in the Spanish Mediterranean Coastal Area (14th-19th Centuries)”, *Climatic Change*, 38 (1998), pp. 473-491. An updated review based on historical documents regarding the Mediterranean basin can be found in Mariano Barriendo, Salvador Gil-Guirado, David Pino, Jordi Tuset, Alfredo Pérez-Morales, Armando Alberola, Joan Costa, Josep Carles Balasch, Xavier Castellort, Jordi Mazón, Josep Lluís Ruiz-Bellet, “Climatic and Social Factors Behind the Spanish Mediterranean Flood Event Chronologies from Documentary Sources (14th-20th centuries)”, *Global and Planetary Change*, 182 (2019), online, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloplacha.2019.102997>.

3. See the graphs and maps of historical flood distribution in Spain between the 15th and 18th centuries in Gerardo Benito, María José Machado, Alfredo Pérez-González, “Climate Change and Flood Sensitivity in Spain”, in *Global Continental Changes: The Context of Palaeohydrology*. Geological Society of London Special Publication, 115 (1996), pp. 85-98, specifically Fig. 3 (p. 92) and Fig. 6 (p. 94). Juan Ignacio Carmona gives a brief overview of the characteristics of the different floods that devastated Seville between the 15th and 17th centuries: Juan Ignacio Carmona, *Crónica urbana del malvivir: insalubridad, desamparo y hambre en la Sevilla de los siglos XVI y XVII*, Seville, Athenaica, 2018, pp. 107-149.

4. Manuel Peña Díaz, “El río como amenaza”, in *Guadalquivir. Mapas y relatos de un río. Imagen y mirada*, ed. by José Peral López, Seville, Universidad de Sevilla, 2017, pp. 46-61: 50-51.

The city of Seville is located at the point where the fluvial plain left by the river widens. This comes as it passes between two mountain ranges, the Sierra Morena and the Betic System, the origin of many tributaries. This geographical location encourages flooding, not only at times of heavy rainfall, but also as a result of the melting of winter snows, which is why many floods occur between January and April. Over time, this problem has been corrected with the construction of reservoirs, but in the 17th century it was a real worry for the people of Seville due to its effects on the city's road infrastructure, the stagnation of the water and the consequent spread of diseases.⁵ The fact that these catastrophic events recurred did, however, allow for preventive urban planning measures to be taken to correct their worst effects and to protect the city from their consequences. For this purpose, a drainage system was devised using gates and drains to prevent the city from flooding during torrential rains. Other urban elements, such as the walls, were also used to contain the flooding of the river. The city council discussed various projects to prevent the continuing damage caused by flooding. It did so after the floods of 1603, when the Italian engineer Tiburcio Spannochi presented a project to reinforce the drains and channel the Tagarete stream that ran along the east side of the walls.⁶ Projects were also undertaken after the floods of 1618 and relaunched after the great flood of 1626. It was then that the proposal to make the floating bridge that linked Seville with Triana into a stone one was taken up again, although it was not carried out in the end.

The persistence and continuity of floods in Seville, of which there were many over the centuries, led to the emergence of guidelines for action to manage such catastrophes, which, as Zamora has already pointed out, allows us to speak of a “culture of flood management”, an expression coined by Rohr for the case of the Danube⁷ and which appeared in various

5. Carmona, *Crónica urbana*, p. 107.

6. BNE, VE/31/12, “Parecer que dio el Comendador Tiburcio Spanoqui, Cavallero del Ábito de San Iuan, ingeniero mayor de Su Magestad y Gentilhombre de Su Casa. A la Muy noble y Muy leal Ciudad de Sevilla sobre los Reparos que convienen para la inundación del Río Guadalquivir”. Francisco Pérez, Seville, 1604. See also Carmona, *Crónica urbana*, p. 134; Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *La Sevilla del siglo XVII*, Seville, Universidad de Sevilla, 1984, p. 61.

7. Fernando Zamora Rodríguez, “‘Quando el agua llegare aquí Sevilla...’. La avenida del río Guadalquivir en 1626 según un documento de la Biblioteca da Ajuda (Portugal)”, *Historia. Instituciones. Documentos*, 41 (2014), pp. 407-431: 409; Christian Rohr, “Floods

different areas. In addition to the urban planning considerations mentioned above, the recurrence of floods gave rise to disaster management planning, with an organised system based on the hierarchy and distribution of tasks between the city's *asistente* and a series of *veinticuatro*s (members of the city council) appointed for this purpose. The pattern was repeated over decades. In the same way, what might be called the religious management of the catastrophe went through a process of development and systemisation, a long way from the improvisation shown in some of the contemporary sources, like *relaciones de sucesos*. A comparative and diachronic analysis of testimonies of the 17th-century floods offers, by contrast, a pattern of collective religious behaviour that was repeated, with small variations, over the years. This was part of what François Walter has called a “coherent trauma management system”.⁸

The study of religious responses to catastrophes has often focused on studying religious, apocalyptic, prophetic and hagiographical texts in order to observe and analyse the reactions of the population and of the regular and secular sectors of the clergy. Although we have numerous testimonies of the floods in Seville, as the studies of González de Caldas, among others, have shown, the purpose of this article is to analyse their presence in *relaciones* throughout the 17th century. In doing so, we pay special attention to the religious phenomenon and its manifestation as a means of reflecting and shaping a collective culture of Christian piety and as an explanatory framework conducive to the repetition of certain behaviours and to the legitimisation of civil and ecclesiastical authorities. *Relaciones* on disasters make up a separate subgenre within the genre of *relaciones* in general.⁹ They usually deal with a single event in a narrative with a tendency towards sensationalism,¹⁰ and they contain broad similarities

of the Upper Danube River and Its Tributaries and Their Impact on Urban Economies (c. 1350-1600): The Examples of the Towns of Krems/Stein and Wels (Austria)”, *Environment and History*, 19/2 (2013), pp. 133-148.

8. François Walter, *Catastrophes. Une histoire culturelle. XVI^e- XXI^e siècle*, Paris, Seuil, 2008.

9. Henry Ettinghausen, *Noticias del siglo XVII: relaciones españolas de sucesos naturales y sobrenaturales*, Barcelona, Puvill, 1995.

10. Manuel Bernal Rodríguez, Carmen Espejo Cala, “Tres relaciones de sucesos del siglo XVII. Propuesta de recuperación de textos preperiodísticos”, *IC Revista Científica de Información y Comunicación*, 1 (2003), pp. 133-176: 136; Abel Iglesias Castellano, “La interpretación de las catástrofes naturales en el siglo XVII”, *Ab Initio*, 8 (2013), pp. 87-120: 98-103.

in terms of the themes, anecdotes and structures addressed, as Soon has pointed out for the case of the Seville floods.¹¹

In the 17th century, there were at least twelve floods of considerable magnitude that saw the river burst its banks as it passed through Seville: in 1603-1604, 1608, 1618, 1626, 1627, 1633, 1642, 1649, 1683-1684, 1691, 1692 and 1697.¹² The flood in 1626 was by far the largest. That year was known in the Iberian Peninsula as the “year of the flood”, a name that already contained clear biblical echoes that later appeared in the accounts and religious manifestations observed in the days that followed. That same year, there were also significant floods in other cities, such as Salamanca and Malaga.¹³ The importance of the flood in Seville in 1626 went beyond the limits of the most immediate news to appear in comedies and other plays. This reminds us of the undoubted value of dramaturgy in the Spanish Golden Age as news, as well as its capacity to establish points of reference in the collective memory. This was the case of *La respuesta está en la mano*, a comedy that publicised the Seville floods of 1626, and *La huerta de Juan Fernández*, by Tirso de Molina.¹⁴

The flood had a great impact in contemporary news reports. It was a true publishing phenomenon, giving rise to many *relaciones* that told, in varying degrees of detail, of the overflowing of the river, the material and human damage caused to the city, the civil and spiritual governments’ management of the situation and the religious rituals to ask for an end to

11. Alan Soon, “Una relación de la riada del Guadalquivir de 1618, botón de muestra de los impresos sobre desastres”, *Archivo Hispalense*, 75/228 (1992), pp. 31-40: 31.

12. See the compilation of floods made by Francisco de Borja Palomo, *Historia crítica de las riadas o grandes avenidas del Guadalquivir en Sevilla desde su Reconquista hasta nuestros días*, 2 vols, Seville, Francisco Álvarez y compañía, 1878.

13. Carlota Fernández Travieso, “Las crecientes del Guadalquivir en Sevilla y Triana y la avenida del Tormes en Salamanca en 1626”, in *Malas noticias y noticias falsas. Estudio y edición de relaciones de sucesos (siglos XVI-XVIII)*, ed. by Valentina Nider and Nieves Pena Sueiro, Trento, Università degli Studi di Trento, 2019, pp. 89-110; Gennaro Schiano, “Las relaciones de desastres naturales entre género y texto. El caso de la riada de San Policarpo (Salamanca, 1626)”, *Cuadernos AISPI*, 15 (2020), pp. 209-226; Gennaro Schiano, *Relatar la catástrofe en el Siglo de Oro. Entre noticia y narración*, Berlin, Peter Lang, 2021. See also the contribution by the same author in this volume.

14. Borja Palomo, *Historia crítica de las riadas*, p. 230; Carlos Santos Fernández, “Sevilla anegada. Once relaciones de sucesos sobre las inundaciones que asolaron Sevilla en 1626”, *Archivo hispalense*, 303-5/100 (2017), pp. 271-298: 273.

the floods.¹⁵ The latter are part of one of the three religious manifestations Alberola identified as a reaction to extreme hydrological phenomena, divided into public prayers *pro pluvia*, aimed at requesting rain and an end to droughts, masses of thanksgiving and public prayers *pro serenitate*, intended to put an end to torrential rains.¹⁶

The authors of these reports sometimes also ventured to put forward hypotheses to explain the floods or to apportion blame and offer remedies. The following quote from the first pages of a discourse by Gerónimo de Contreras in 1626, on the prevention of diseases caused by floods, is a particularly good example. In it, the author alludes to the sanitary and urban planning measures to take to prevent the spread of future diseases, including the purification and renewal of the air in houses and enclosed spaces. But, before dealing with those issues, he points out that:

en todo assí supuesto en este tiempo que ay antes que vengan enfermedades, roguemos a Dios que no passe adelante con su castigo, entrenando la fuerza de los aspectos de las estrellas que causan el año tan destemplado: y para que seamos oydos será bien reconciliarnos con Su Magestad divina, y procurar santo que nos apadrine suplicádoselo, haziéndole ofertas y fiestas para más obligarle. Hecho esto con el afecto que se deve, tratemos de los remedios humanos, fuera de los referidos que se dijeron en la junta, que esos se harán.¹⁷

In this text, Gerónimo de Contreras presents a plan of action in which religious devotion, in line with the performative and collective Christian piety promoted by the Catholic Church since the Counter-Reformation, is divided into two phases. In the first, an end to the disaster (in this case, a flood) is requested, and, in the second, thanks are given to God for that purpose through offerings, commemorative processions and other pious

15. A compilation of eleven *relaciones de sucesos* on this theme can be found in Santos Fernández, “Sevilla anegada”. See also other transcriptions of *relaciones de sucesos* in Borja Palomo, *Historia crítica de las riadas*; Soon, “Una relación de la riada del Guadalquivir de 1618”; Ettinghausen, *Noticias del siglo XVII*; Bernal Rodríguez-Espejo Cala, “Tres relaciones de sucesos”; Zamora Rodríguez, “Quando el agua llegare”; Fernández Travieso, “Las crecientes del Guadalquivir”; Schiano, *Relatar la catástrofe*.

16. Armando Alberola Romá, “Clima, desastre y religiosidad en los diaristas valencianos de los siglos XVI y XVII”, *Obradoiro de Historia Moderna*, 25 (2016), pp. 41-66: 45.

17. BNE, VE/197/32, “Discurso y apuntamientos en razón de los que denotan los temporales, y inundación, y otras causas de enfermedades que a avido en Sevilla, y remedios para su preservación: dirigido a los Señores Regente, y Oydores, y Alcaldes de la Real Audiencia de la dicha Ciudad por el Dotor Gerónimo de Contreras”, [1626?].

manifestations. Petit-Breuilh has identified this dual pattern of religious management of disasters through public *pro serenitate* prayers, observed in the management of floods in Seville, for the whole of Spanish America.¹⁸

2. *Public pro serenitate prayers: the invocation of the Blessed Sacrament and the mediation of Saints Justa and Rufina, patrons of the city*

One of the fundamental characteristics of the paradigm shift in disaster writing at the beginning of the 17th century is precisely the emphasis on the action in the face of catastrophe of public authorities, whose agents are presented as heroes of the story.¹⁹ Thus, in the *relaciones* about the floods, we can see the construction of a double heroism: on one hand, the civil authorities, represented by the *asistente* and some of the most important secular figures in the city, and, on the other hand, the ecclesiastical hierarchy, whose mediation before God is essential to ensure the protection of the city and to ask for an end to the rains. Although the aim here is to analyse the ritual manifestations and the construction of the heroic image related to the religious sphere, civil authorities were also referred to as true heroes with almost miraculous attributes. To take one example: “Su Señoría [conde de Salvatierra] visitó por su persona muy a menudo todos los puestos de peligro, sin reparar en las incomodidades del tiempo, y de las aguas”.²⁰ However, not all authorities enjoyed the same positive publicity. In the great flood of 1626, the *asistente* Fernando Ramírez Fariñas was widely criticised. Peña Díaz includes one of the sonnets that circulated about the ineffectiveness of the municipal government:

¿Cómo, Betis soberbio, así violaste
Las leyes de tu margen? ¿Cómo osado
La ciudad más insigne has inundado
Que a tus locos cristales hace engaste?

18. María Eugenia Petit-Breuilh Sepúlveda, “Religiosidad y rituales hispanos en América ante los desastres (siglos XVI-XVII): las procesiones”, *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 35 (2017), pp. 83-115: 87.

19. Françoise Lavocat, “Narratives of Catastrophe in the Early Modern Period: Awareness of Historicity and Emergence of Interpretative Viewpoints”, *Poetics Today*, 33/3-4 (2012), pp. 253-299: 271.

20. BNE, VE/170/32, “Relación de lo sucedido en la inundación y avenida del Río de Sevilla, por enero de este año de 1642”. Seville, Francisco de Lira, 1642, f. 6v.

¿Acaso mi Asistencia aquí ignoraste?
 -No tal: antes de largo iba enfadado,
 Y abierta vi la puerta, y heme entrado,
 Y no he vuelto a salir porque cerraste.²¹

As a reaction, a few months later a *relación de sucesos* was published in Seville by Francisco de Lira entitled *Enundación de Sevilla por la creciente de su río Guadalquivir. Prevenciones antes del daño y remedios para su reparo*, which Palomo considered to be “official” because of its intention to highlight the figure of the *asistente* and to refute the criticisms made against him.²² However, this did not prevent riots in the Feria neighbourhood.

Religious rituals appear in the *relaciones* accompanied by a degree of improvisation, arising from the will of the citizens and of the clergy themselves. This, however, does not correspond to the repeated patterns observed over time. On the contrary, there was a series of elements shared by the processions and rogations that provided a type of structure, which meant that they had to be planned and organised as a pattern of behaviour: a pre-established calendar (which, in the case of public prayers during and after disasters, is, of course, impossible), some rules, a space, some myths and rituals, and some ornaments or material elements.²³

For the flood of 1626, we have, among other documents, valuable testimony from a letter sent by the antiquarian Rodrigo Caro to Francisco de Quevedo on 10 February 1626 and transcribed by Palomo in his work on the floods in Seville. What began as light rain between 17 and 19 January soon became a downpour, a situation which, together with the thaw in the nearby mountains, caused the Guadalquivir to rise and overflow on the 24th, the day it reached the city walls. *Asistente* Fernando Ramírez Fariñas summoned the city council on the 19th and appointed people in charge of overseeing the city’s gates and drains. Although the drains, which in less calamitous circumstances allowed water out of the city, were quickly plugged and caulked, it was not enough to stop the force of the water. The

21. Peña Díaz, “El río como amenaza”, p. 52.

22. Borja Palomo, *Historia crítica de las riadas*, p. 249; Schiano, *Relatar la catástrofe*, p. 86. This is the *relación de sucesos* published by Bernal Rodríguez-Espejo Cala, “Tres relaciones de sucesos”.

23. Virginia García Acosta, “Divinidad y desastres. Interpretaciones, manifestaciones y respuestas”, *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 35 (2017), pp. 46-82: 60.

Arenal gate was the first to fall, and the water flooded the entire area from the Jerez gate to the Macarena, where it stopped thanks to the precautions of the residents, who had had the time to properly caulk the gate. It did enter, however, through the New Gate, although this could have been closed shortly thereafter. The Feria, Duque, Alameda, Arenal, San Julián, San Martín, San Andrés and Santa Lucía districts were flooded. The flood was, in fact, a double flood, because there were two phases. After an initial fall in the water level in early February, the increase in rainfall around the 12th caused the river to rise again, and the level did not drop until 20 February.²⁴

At the beginning of the 17th century, Seville had about 100,000 inhabitants, according to the most recent estimates made by Jiménez Montes and Castillo Rubio, based on the “Padrón de las casas y vecinos que hay en la ciudad de Sevilla”, carried out in 1561, adding the regular and secular clergy, who were excluded from that official register.²⁵ In 1548, when the cosmographer Pedro de Medina wrote his *Libro de las grandezas y cosas memorables de España*, there were 25 parishes, 32 monasteries and 110 hospitals in the city.²⁶ Many of them were not saved from the onslaught of the waters, as is recorded in many reports. At least nine churches and 27 seminaries, convents and religious hospitals were flooded, along with an estimated 11,000 homes, according to Caro’s letter. If we take into account the assiduity with which the accounts of the catastrophe relate the miraculous way that religious buildings were saved from a tragic fate,²⁷ the long list of sacred places destroyed by the flooding of Seville is striking. Fernández Travieso has identified this narrative strategy with a propagandistic intention in an attempt to give the story greater credibility.²⁸ In Geraldo da Vinha’s *relacion*, printed in Lisbon in 1626, a whole page

24. Carmona, *Crónica urbana*, p. 132.

25. Germán Jiménez Montes, Juan Manuel Castillo Rubio, “La construcción de un entrepôt: organización urbana de los mercaderes extranjeros en Sevilla en la segunda mitad del siglo XVI”, in *Monarquías en conflicto. Linajes y noblezas en la articulación de la Monarquía Hispánica*, ed. by José Ignacio Fortea Pérez, Juan E. Gelabert, Roberto López Vela and Elena Postigo Castellanos, Santander, Fundación Española de Historia Moderna, 2018, pp. 325-335: 326.

26. Quoted in María Dolores Cabra Loredó, Elena María Santiago Páez, *Iconografía de Sevilla. Tomo 1: 1400-1650*, Madrid, El Viso, 1988, p. 17.

27. Schiano, “Las relaciones de desastres”, p. 213.

28. Fernández Travieso, “Las crecientes del Guadalquivir”, p. 99.

is devoted to this purpose, while in the *relación* published by Salvador de Cea in Cordoba, a long and detailed list occupying two handwritten pages is attached and includes the friaries, convents, churches and hospitals flooded in Triana and Seville, as well as those that were saved.²⁹ Despite the sensationalism characteristic of *relaciones de sucesos*, scholars agree that the flood was genuinely destructive and estimate that about two-thirds of the city was under water.

Among the ecclesiastical institutions most affected was the castle of San Jorge, seat of the Inquisition tribunal. González de Caldas used the testimonies preserved in the inquisitorial documentation to analyse the impact of the floods on this structure.³⁰ It stood on the banks of the river in the Triana district and near the floating bridge that linked the neighbourhood with the rest of the city of Seville. This area suffered very badly over the century from the onslaught of the waters. However, this fact appears very rarely in the *relaciones*, and this silence concerning one of the worst affected structures is significant. The 1642 *relacion*, by contrast, expressly mentions the fact that it was saved, associating this with divine intervention:

Anegó a Triana y queriendo subir [el agua] al Tribunal del Santo Oficio, el respeto le detuvo en los últimos escalones que están antes de entrar en la antesala del Secreto, igualándose empero con lo más alto del Altar de San Jorge, e inundando todo el quarto de el señor don Iuan Ortiz, y del señor don Agustín de Villavicencio, que constantes no quisieron desampararle, aunque se lo pidieron, juzgando que su falta la haría a los ánimos de los demás moradores del Castillo.³¹

29. BNE, VC/224/40, “Relaçam verdadeira do lastimoso successo de Sevilha, com as enchentes das agoas neste mez de Ianeiro de 1626”, Lisbon, Geraldo da Vinha, 1626; BNE, VE/107/10, “Traslado de una carta que un vecino de la ciudad de Sevilla embió a un su amigo a la ciudad de Córdoba, en que le da cuenta del diluvio y ruyna que el Río Guadalquivir ha hecho en la dicha ciudad de Sevilla y Triana, rompiendo la puerta del Arenal, y destruyendo y anegando las dos partes de la ciudad, derribando casas, ahogando personas y vestias, destruyendo haziendas, dexando a muchos pobres, llevándose del Arenal toda la mayor parte de las mercaderias que vinieron de Indias. Y como la santa Iglesia de Sevilla sacò en processión el Lignum Cruzis y grandes rogativas a N. Señora de los Reyes. Empeçò en Sevilla la creciente domingo 25. de Enero deste año de 1626 a las dos de la mañana”, Córdoba, Salvador de Cea, 1626.

30. María Victoria González de Caldas Méndez, “El Santo Oficio en Sevilla”, *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*, 27/2 (1991), pp. 59-114.

31. BNE, VE/170/32, “Relación de lo sucedido...”, 1642.

Nor was the floating bridge that linked Triana with Seville, and the only crossing point between the two shores, spared by the waters. Formed by 17 boats tied together to form a passage between Triana and the Arenal, it was repeatedly destroyed by the river's floods. After the disaster of 1626, *asistente* Diego Hurtado de Mendoza promoted a new plan in 1630 to transform it into a stone bridge capable of withstanding the floods of the river. However, the design, by Andrés de Oviedo, of which several drawings are preserved, was abandoned before being carried out.³² The city was, therefore, partially cut off from its surroundings, making the arrival of goods and food difficult. The documents generated as a result of the loss of goods in the port show the destruction caused by the rising water. The economic losses were considerable due to the destruction of the docks, the Arenal and the Customs area. This is shown in a contemporary *relación* written by Bishop Juan de la Sal:

La pérdida de mercancías, alhajas y hacienda de caydas y menoscabos de casas forçosamente a de ser de inestimable valor. Nunca el arenal de Sevilla con la venida reciente de la flota se vio tan rico como en aquesta ocasión. Desde la Torre del Oro hasta la puente [de Triana], que es un grandíssimo trecho, no avía sino montes de palo de Brasil, de caxas de açúcar, de infinidad de corambre y de otras mil cosas de valor.³³

Rodrigo Caro's story shows scenes of fear and desperation, with terrified citizens trying to escape the waters amid cries and lamentations. Religious and apocalyptic references are woven into the account:

Sonaba el viento furiosamente y el agua, y las campanas delas parroquias, que tocaban llamando socorro o plegarias; y redoblando el viento los alaridos de tanta gente que padecía, en la oscuridad y tristeza de la noche, todo junto formaba un espantoso y confuso sonido, que parecía una prevención del juicio final.³⁴

This explanatory image is common in accounts of disasters. In the case of Seville, we find another example in a verse *relación* of the flood

32. Cabra Loredó, Santiago Páez, *Iconografía de Sevilla*, pp. 160-166; Marcos Pacheco Morales-Padrón, "Consideraciones sobre la sustitución del puente de barcas de Triana: un proyecto de puente de piedra (1631)", *Atrio. Revista de Historia del Arte*, 24 (2018), pp. 42-57.

33. BA, 54-XI-24 n°13, "La avenida de Sevilla en 25 de Enero de 1626, domingo día de la Conversión de San Pablo". Quoted in Zamora Rodríguez, "Quando el agua llegare", p. 422.

34. Quoted in Borja Palomo, *Historia crítica de las riadas*, p. 240.

of 1608. During this flood, known as the flood of San Benito because it happened on Saint Benedict's Day, a clergyman from Campo de Calatrava, who claimed to have been an eyewitness to the events, wrote a *relación* in which he explained the events based on references to the Last Judgment:

poco más de media noche,
entre doce y una era,
comenzaron dos mil truenos
y relámpagos la tierra

cubrir y atemorizar,
que parece que ya llega
la fin del mundo y comienza
el juicio que el hombre espera.³⁵

The *relación* ends with a plea for God's clemency, asking Him to intercede on behalf of the city and to show mercy. The typical sensationalist nature of these *relaciones de sucesos* can be seen in the painstaking way they sometimes describe the scenes of panic and fear, the citizens perched on the roofs of houses to escape the water, the people hanging out of windows and the boatmen who, in an image reminiscent of biblical times, came to save those who were trapped. There is, however, no lack of cases of corruption and criticism: some demanded money for saving people from the waters in the boats, and the price of bread increased as a result of shortages in the days following the disaster.

The first devotional measure identified in the reports was the uncovering of the Blessed Sacrament in all churches and convents not reached by water. This divine protection in the form of the Eucharist was very common in the Hispanic context due to the link between the Habsburg

35. Diego de Brizuela Corcuera, "Relación muy verdadera de la tempestad, huracanes y temblores de tierra que sucedieron en esta ciudad de Sevilla, día del señor san Benito, que se contaron veinte y uno de marzo deste año de 1608. Compuesta por el maestro Diego de Brizuela Corcuera, cura propio de la villa de los Pozuelos, en el campo de Calatrava por su Majestad, estante este día en Sevilla. Con un romance a la postre del glorioso san Benito, compuesto por el mismo autor, en cuyo día acació", 1608. Library of the Heirs of the Duke of T'Serclaes. Quoted by Rosario Consuelo Gonzalo García, "Noticias sobre las crecidas del Guadalquivir en Sevilla en la primera década del siglo XVII. Edición de una relación en verso de la 'avenida de san Benito' en 1608", *Studia Aurea*, 13 (2019), pp. 261-296.

dynasty and the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Negredo's studies show the close relationship that was forged over time between the cult of the Blessed Sacrament, as one of the main orthodox principles of Trent, and the House of Austria.³⁶ Making the Eucharist the protector of the dynasty automatically extended this protection to the entire Habsburg territories and polity, as a dynastic cult. The unveiling of the Blessed Sacrament as the first measure of spiritual management of a disaster therefore appears repeatedly in the *relaciones*, inserted in a broader context of religious invocation and dynastic legitimacy.

In addition to the Blessed Sacrament, two appeals for intercession are particularly important for the analysis of the public *pro serenitate* prayers: an appeal to Saints Justa and Rufina, patron saints of Seville, exemplified in the procession with their relics around the convent of the Trinitarians, where they were kept,³⁷ and the ascent to the Giralda with the Lignum Crucis: the relics of the cross kept in the cathedral. The cult of Saints Justa and Rufina dates back to medieval times, with two phases of major importance: the high medieval and the early modern in the 17th and 18th centuries, when the devotion reached its greatest extent. They had already acted as mediators at times of tragedy in the city, during the plague epidemics of the 14th and 15th centuries. Similarly, Ortiz de Zúñiga, in his *Anales eclesiasticos y seculares*, traced their conversion into patron saints of the city to their protection of the Giralda during a storm in 1396. Their cult via public *pro serenitate* prayers is already documented in the floods of 1485, when votive masses were held in the convent of the Trinitarians.³⁸ In fact, it was the earthquake of 1504 that made them the patron saints of the city, as the miracle of the survival of the Giralda, which remained standing during the quake, was attributed to their intercession. In this way, the iconography of Saints

36. Fernando Negredo del Cerro, "La palabra de Dios al servicio del Rey. La legitimación de la Casa de Austria en los sermones del siglo XVII", *Criticón*, 84-85 (2002), pp. 295-311.

37. According to tradition, the friary stands on the site of the prison where the saints were incarcerated. See Carlos José Romero Mensaque, "Culto y devoción a las santas Justa y Rufina en Sevilla durante los siglos XVI al XVII", in *San Rafael y el patronazgo de los santos mártires en Andalucía. Historia, arte y espiritualidad*, ed. by Juan Aranda Doncel and Julián Hurtado de Molina Delgado, Córdoba, Hermandad de San Rafael, Ilustre Sociedad Andaluza de Estudios Histórico-Jurídicos, 2016, pp. 147-167: 151.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

Justa and Rufina adopted the image of the protection of the Giralda as an analogy of the protection of the city as a whole. The fact that in 1602 the supposed relics of the saints – the head of St Rufina and a bone of St Justa – were transferred to the city from a parish in Witillaer, in the Empire, provided considerable support for the establishment of their cult.³⁹ This was reinforced by the inscription that a canon of the cathedral, Pedro de Mendoza, added to the *Regla Vieja* of the choir:

¡O Santísimas y bienaventuradas Vírgenes Justa y Rufina que a esta hora fuisteis vistas (según por testimonios de muchos se mostró) tener en ambas, una de parte y otra de otra abrazadas la torre por que no pudiese caer! Y hecha muy grande suplicación, cesó aquella tempestad, habiendo la torre tres veces amenazada cayda.⁴⁰

From the beginning, the devotion to the saints was particularly linked to their protection against disasters of natural origin. So, every time a tragedy of this kind occurred, both civil and religious authorities resorted to their mediation. In the following letter to Francisco de Quevedo, Rodrigo Caro gives an account of some of the first religious manifestations observed in the city:

Salieron los frailes de la Santísima Trinidad en procesión con el Santísimo Sacramento temiendo que se anegaba todo el mundo; y refieren los religiosos que respetó el agua á su Autor y no entró en el convento.⁴¹

Francisco de Rueda, the father superior of the Trinitarian friary, was in charge of the public prayers. First, he said a mass asking for an end to the rains. The community then took the Holy Sacrament in procession in order to protect the convent, together with the relics of Saints Justa and Rufina, who were, at the time, the patron saints of Seville. Contemporary observers say the procession went to the edge of the platform on which the friary stood, where Friar Francisco de Rueda raised the host before the water, with the other friars behind him. The water came close to the friar's habit, but did not wet him. As the narrator put it:

39. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

40. Quoted in Peter Cherry, "Santas Justa y Rufina: una nota iconográfica", in *En torno a Santa Rufina. Velázquez de lo íntimo a lo cortesano*, ed. by Benito Navarrete Prieto, Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez, Peter Cherry and Carmen Garrido, Seville, Fundación Focus Abengoa, 2008, pp. 49-65: 57.

41. Borja Palomo, *Historia crítica de las riadas*, p. 241.

Mostró el Santísimo Sacramento á las aguas, y luego se detuvieron creciendo en alto, y sobreponiéndose unas á otras, renovándose el milagro del Jordán a vista del maná verdadero, con grande admiración y espanto de los presentes.⁴²

After this, the procession withdrew and the river water again approached the convent, but without going beyond the limits marked by the chains. The following day, the Holy Sacrament was again taken out in procession, at exactly the same time when the river had begun to flood the day before, and this was repeated every day over the following weeks.

The friary of the Santísima Trinidad held relics of the city's patron saints, Justa and Rufina, and, according to tradition, its basement was where they had been imprisoned. It is mentioned in practically all the *relaciones*, although the relics are not always referred to. However, in one way or another it is usually linked to miraculous events, in which the friary's hierarchy always plays a mediating role to achieve the intercession of the patron saints. After the end of the floods, a procession to the friary was held to give thanks for the conclusion of the disaster.⁴³

As Palmieri has emphasised, a disaster of natural origin was a crucial moment when the ability of a saint or a specific invocation to protect its people, its believers, its territory or, in this case, its community was called into question.⁴⁴ This success is demonstrated in the *relaciones* with various strategies: public prayers in the form of processions, miracles around the convent or even, when it was not possible to appeal for direct intervention, the transposition of the myth of the patron saint onto other characters, making them into heroic figures as *alter egos* of the saint.

In the *relación* written by Melchor de León Garabito and published by Antonio Vázquez in Salamanca, the Trinitarian friary became the scene of a miracle.⁴⁵ It tells how three customs officers took refuge within the walls of the church as the water rose. When they got there, they heard a woman calling for help for her drowning son and went to alert the friars.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

43. Cherry, "Santas Justa y Rufina", p. 64.

44. Pasquale Palmieri, "Protecting the Faithful City: Disasters and the Cult of the Saints (Naples, 1573-1587)", in *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture*, ed. by Domenico Cecere, Chiara De Caprio, Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Pasquale Palmieri, Rome, Viella, 2018, pp. 207-220.

45. BNE, VE/59/80, "Melchor de León Garabito, Discurso trágico de el grande Diluvio y portentosas avenidas sucedidas en la muy noble ciudad de Sevilla desde 25 de enero hasta 16 de febrero de 1626", Salamanca, Antonio Vázquez, 1626.

They took the Blessed Sacrament out in procession and the water gradually receded, but when they went to look for the woman, they found no trace of her. What, on the face of it, could be seen as a dramatic event – the death of a woman and her child – is reinterpreted from a devotional point of view as a miracle. It was presented as “a warning from heaven, a prodigy” which had allowed the clerics to save both themselves and the conventual dependencies.

A different strategy can be seen in the 1608 *relación de sucesos*, mentioned above. It specifies the damage caused by the water in several churches and convents, including that of Saints Justa and Rufina. However, in the account, the saints are transposed into a miracle that happened to two sisters from Seville, who died during the flood. In this way, the mediation of the patronesses continued to be effective, if not from a material point of view, then from a spiritual perspective.

3. *Material mediation and the city as a collective setting for a miracle: the procession of the Lignum Crucis*

The holding of a public procession also encouraged the population to identify with the miracle and made the whole population not only spectators, but also active agents of this mediation through their presence. On 6 February 1626, the Church took the Virgin of the Kings in procession, together with the Lignum Crucis, the relic that was kept in Seville's cathedral. The latter was taken to the top of the Giralda tower, from where public prayers for the cessation of rain were made in a two-stage rite.

Llévose en procesión a la torre Mayor el precioso Lignun Crucis, y se mostró en las cuatro ventanas de la torre; y esto ha sido por dos veces: en la primera cesó el aire que furiosamente corría, y bajó el río mas de dos varas, y por luego serenó el tiempo: en la segunda vez que le sacaron a la misma torre, fue cosa también maravillosa, que estando en una ventana exorcizando la tempestad según el ritual romano antiguo, llegando el Preste a decir aquellas palabras *Appareat arcus tuus in nubibus coeli*, al punto pareció el arco en el cielo a la misma parte del exorcismo, y por luego serenó.⁴⁶

The reaction was not long in coming:

46. Quoted in Borja Palomo, *Historia crítica de las riadas*, pp. 245-246.

Fue tan eficaz esta acción cristiana que permitió nuestro señor que al punto amaynase el voraz viento y que las nubes no ocasionassen más temores, alentáronse las gentes, aclamavan al cielo reconociendo tan portentoso beneficio, agora podemos dezir lustrose el campo, mirándose el Sol en el cristal derramado por sus márgenes.⁴⁷

A few months later, on 3 May 1626, the Lignum Crucis again went out in procession, this time accompanied by the Virgin of the Waters, in line with the worship and prayers being held for the end of the flooding of the river and with the masses of thanksgiving following the catastrophes.⁴⁸

The procession of the Lignum Crucis was repeated over the years, with variations. Research by scholars like Petit-Breuilh in Latin America has highlighted the fact that the behavioural model adopted for public prayer during and after catastrophes was similar to the processional and penitential model of Holy Week.⁴⁹ In this sense, religious manifestations evolved towards more baroque forms of piety over the years. For the flood of 1684, the biggest flood of the century after that of 1626, we find a more detailed description offering a view of a more Baroque ritual:

El Ilustrísimo Cabildo ordenó salir en Proceſſión General, acompañado de las demás Religiones, a la Iglesia Mayor, pidiendo a Dios misericordia, para que templasse su enojo. Iban cantando la Letanía de N. S. con mucha devoción, llevando los pies descalços, y por asylo y protección el Estandarte de nuestra Redempción, la Santísima Cruz, adornada de rica pedrería, y en el cuerpo della un pedazo del Santísimo Lignum Crucis. Después de aver hecho oración a N. S. de los Reyes y a san Fernando, Tutelares y Patronos de Sevilla, y pedido con mucho fervor intercediessen con nuestro Señor, que suspendiese su ira y embaynasse el estoque de su justicia, y se apiadasse de aquel afligido Pueblo en la misma forma de Proceſſión subieron a la Torre, hasta llegar a la Giralda, donde postrados de rodillas por el suelo, y enarbolado el precioso Madero de la Santa Cruz conjuraron las nubes: Cosa maravillosa! Prodigio inaudito! Al mismo tiempo empezó a serenarse el Cielo, y ahuyentarse las nubes: quedaron todos maravillados del portento y con la misma orden y devoción baxaron a la Iglesia a dar gracias a nuestra Señora y San Fernando, por los beneficios recibidos por interceſſión suya [...].⁵⁰

47. BNE, VE/59/80, "Discurso trágico...", 1626.

48. Quoted in Zamora Rodríguez, "Quando el agua llegare", p. 420.

49. Petit-Breuilh Sepúlveda, "Religiosidad y rituales", pp. 85-86.

50. BNE, VE/100/15, "Relación verdadera...", 1684.

Afterwards, the relic was taken to the main altar while chants of invocation to Saints Justa and Rufina were sung again.⁵¹ As can be seen in this list, by now the procession was perfectly organised and structured. The improvisation that seemed to be present at the beginning of the century had gone. It now necessarily required the civil and ecclesiastical authorities to work together for it to operate properly, as Alberola has pointed out.⁵² It did not differ too much from the descriptions of processions praying for the end of other contemporary events, such as the invocations made to end the plague.

4. *The feast of Corpus Christi: an instrument for the iconography and memory of the floods*

The study of the Corpus Christi festivities, with large processions and ephemeral decorations, can make a contribution to the analysis of religious mediation in the face of disasters and the construction of their memory and management. On the feast of Corpus Christi in Seville on 11 June 1626, an *auto sacramental* was performed, entitled *El socorro de Cádiz* and written by Juan Pérez de Montalbán. Referring to the Anglo-Dutch attack on the city of Cadiz in November of the previous year, it is an early example of a religious play (*auto sacramental*) described as “de circunstancias”, with a historical and allegorical theme.⁵³ The attack on Cadiz served as a temporal reference providing a story for some *relaciones de sucesos*, while at the same time framing a series of tragic and catastrophic events in the same explanatory framework that had divine punishment as its ultimate reference.⁵⁴ This is demonstrated in the following extract from a *relación*:

51. Cherry, “Santas Justa y Rufina”, p. 65.

52. Armando Alberola Romá, “Procesiones, rogativas, conjuros y exorcismos: el campo valenciano ante la plaga de langosta de 1756”, *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 21 (2003), pp. 7-75.

53. Teresa Ferrer Valls, “El auto sacramental y la alegorización de la Historia: *El socorro de Cádiz* de Juan Pérez de Montalbán”, *Studia Aurea*, 6 (2012), pp. 99-116. A modern edition of the *auto sacramental* is published by Ferrer Valls in *Cádiz 1625. El ataque angloholandés en las noticias y el teatro*, ed. by Beatriz Álvarez García and Teresa Ferrer Valls, Madrid, Doce Calles, 2021, pp. 269-312.

54. The explanatory interweaving of political events and disasters is an issue already highlighted for the case of Naples by Domenico Cecere, “Moralising Pamphlets: Calamities,

El caso es (para que no andemos por las ramas) que Dios ha días que está resuelto en castigarnos. Ha puesto en diferentes manos el azote. Ya en las de los herejes olandeses, ya en las de la Armada de Ingalaterra deve de aver echado de ver que estos verdugos no se dan buena maña en açotarnos i ha encomendado el castigo al río de Sevilla que le va obedeciendo puntualmente como criatura suya que a ojos cerrados executa las órdenes que le da.⁵⁵

At the end of the play, the Church appears on the scene via the well-known iconography of the Eucharistic ship which comes to save its people. Although the play refers to the defence of Cadiz against the English navy, the description and narration of the appearance on the scene of the ship of the Eucharist contains many similarities with the actions of the ecclesiastical chapter during the floods, and could also serve as a reference for this image. The iconography of the ship of the Church, the ship of the Eucharist or the Eucharistic ship was especially popular in the post-Tridentine Catholic world as a symbol of the Church's triumph over its enemies and its function as a guide. In the scene from the religious play, the character of the Infanta tells of the arrival of the Church portrayed as a galley, with Saints Isidore, Laureano, Justa and Rufina painted on its banner. These form part of the distinguished group of saints who, at one time or another, were considered patrons of the city of Seville. This image cannot have been strange, as the panoramic view of Seville made in 1617 and published by Joannes Janssonius also shows a tender decorated with pennants showing three Sevillian saints.⁵⁶ Thus, although the narrative of the religious play refers to the attack on Cadiz, the mention of the ship of the Church referenced an event geographically closer to the audience of the performance and a memory of the continuous mediation of the saints on behalf of their city.

The galley was decorated with the arms of the Church and city and was loaded with bread, a Eucharistic symbol but also a reference to the Church's work of sustenance during disasters. This image, which also refers to the conjunction of civil and religious authorities, is not unlike those we find in *relaciones* of floods and undoubtedly would not have seemed very different to spectators:

Information and Propaganda in Seventeenth-Century Naples", in *Disaster Narratives*, pp. 129-146.

55. Quoted in Zamora Rodríguez, "Quando el agua llegare", p. 425

56. Cabra Loredo-Santiago Páez, *Iconografía de Sevilla*, pp. 132-140.

No se olvidó la Santa Iglesia desta ciudad, su Cabildo, y Prebendados de usar en esta ocasión de su acostumbrada grandeza y liberalidad: mandó que cada día se repartiessen dos mil hogaças entre los pobres, compradas a subidos precios, llevándolas algunos de sus capitulares en barcos a Triana, a los Humeros, la Carreteria, Alameda y otras partes.⁵⁷

As appeared in other *relaciones de sucesos* reporting disruptive events in the Seville area, the Church took the initiative by distributing provisions. This image is therefore not specific to the management of disasters of natural origin, but rather to the management of disasters of all kinds. This is, after all, an eminently Christian trait, like aiding the defenceless.

5. *The Church hierarchy as heroes of disaster: political management, urban management and spiritual management*

The reports on the floods in Seville were circulated widely in Europe, showing an interconnected publishing market and a thirst for news across borders. This is also, undoubtedly, a reflection of the important international and commercial dimension of the Andalusian city. Santos Fernández has compiled reports written in Portuguese and French, to which others in English and German at least should be added, entirely devoted to the floods in Seville.⁵⁸ This international circulation reflects the interest in such narratives, in which the miraculous dimension is often included as a sensational element, as evidenced by the German account. This one,

57. BNE, VE/170/32, “Relación de lo sucedido...”, 1642.

58. BNE, VC/224/40, “Relaçam verdadeira...”, 1626; “Recit veritable de l’espouventable desastre arrivé en Sivile, l’une des principales villes d’Espagne, le 25 Janvier de la presente année 1626. Iouxte la coppie imprimée à Cordova. Paris, Jean du Hamel, 1626”. Both are compiled in Santos Fernández, “Sevilla anegada”. HAB, Gi 274, “Warhafft neue Zeittung, welcher gestalt ein schreckliche Wasserfluth im Königreich Hispanien an unterschiedlichen Orten, sonderlich zu Sivilien und Salamanca, an Gut, Land un Leuthen uberauß grossen Schaden gethan. Neben etlich Mirackel oder Wunderwercken”, [s.i.], [s.i.], 1626. See also ESTC, no. S126711, “Sivill in Spayne. Or, A true report of a most strange and wonderfull inundation, or prodigious floud, which hapned at Sivill in Spayne, with the exceeding great ouer-flowings of the River Wadalkier, and the great hurt that it did in the city of Sivill, Triana, and other villages round about: being first penned in Spanish verse, by Thomas de Mesa, inhabitant within the sayd city of Sivill, and imprinted in the city of S. James in Spayne, with licence from the Ordinary, in the house of Lewes de Paz”, London, Simon Stafford, 16[04?].

which claims to be a copy (though not a verbatim one) of the one printed in Córdoba by Salvador de Cea, alludes directly to the miraculous events in its title: the “miracles or marvellous events”. A more in-depth study of the representation of the religious element in these *relaciones* would make it possible to analyse possible variations, interpolations, modifications or deletions as markers of a process through which the interpretation of disasters became more religious.⁵⁹

All of the spiritual strategies recorded in the *relaciones* and all of the religious manifestations that took place during the floods and in the days that followed have one characteristic in common: the necessary mediation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as the point of confluence between God and the earth. In this way, their action is as fundamental as that of the saintly heroes and, through mediating action, they become the architects of the successful spiritual management of the catastrophe. The ecclesiastical authorities are represented as leading figures and guarantors of the return to order.⁶⁰

In memory of the miracle, the community of the Trinitarians established a celebration on its anniversary, in which the Blessed Sacrament was unveiled to commemorate the salvation of the convent. The conjunction of activities and place, represented by the procession, the invocations by the clergy and the protection of the Church as the location of the miracle, was, in the eyes of contemporary witnesses and the writers of these *relaciones*, what finally ensured divine intervention and the protection of those who were there. These same elements also appear in the case of the procession of the Lignum Crucis, the other fundamental element in the *pro serenitate* public prayers in Seville during the Golden Age.

The continuous presence over time of the convent of the Santísima Trinidad, the relics of Saints Justa and Rufina as mediators and protectors of the city and the ascent of the Lignum Crucis to the tower of the Giralda are shown as accepted guidelines for the spiritual management of the disaster, thus accepting what Gerónimo de Contreras had already pointed out in his discourse. It is also a reflection of Baroque piety, linked to

59. Elaine Fulton, “Acts of God: The Confessionalization of Disaster in Reformation Europe”, in *Historical Disasters in Context: Science, Religion and Politics*, ed. by Andrea Janku, Gerrit J. Schenk and Franz Mauelshagen, New York-London, Routledge, 2012, pp. 54-74.

60. Bernal Rodríguez-Espejo Cala, “Tres relaciones de sucesos”, p. 143.

ephemeral displays, here in the form of processions and exacerbated over time, as we can see in the *relaciones* from the end of the 17th century. The establishment and maintenance of subsequent commemorative ceremonies, in addition to reinforcing the pious sense of prevention, helped form a collective memory of the events.⁶¹ This was fundamental in establishing community resilience⁶² and prevented those who had been fundamental in successfully combatting the disaster from being forgotten. In the end, this meant reinforcing the secular and religious authorities. These events were not lacking in moral considerations, the reinforcement of Christian thought and behavioural patterns, or the legitimisation of the ecclesiastical hierarchy as mediators before divine intervention.

The *relaciones de sucesos* thus reflect a heroic duality between civil and ecclesiastical authorities, as seen in the combination of noble and religious initiatives that went to make up emergency management, both of which were necessary for its success. This pattern, present in the *relaciones*, with an important emphasis on the actions of political and religious authorities, is part of the process of narrativisation of disaster writing and the conceptualisation of the disaster as a historic event, as identified by Lavocat.⁶³ The measures taken by assistants and members of the municipal government of Seville, as well as those adopted by the ecclesiastical authorities, mediators for the intercession of the saints, are set out individually in the *relaciones*. Those carrying them out reveal themselves to be the specific, identifiable heroes that led the population of Seville to return to social order after the floods. Their heroic nature is further reinforced by morally deplorable surrounding situations (the blackmail of certain boatmen, bread price inflation), whose anonymous actors behave as true anti-heroes of the catastrophe. The *relaciones de sucesos* were, therefore, a vehicle for the transmission of behavioural guidelines in the face of catastrophe, the construction of collective memory and the reinforcement of political and religious authorities.

61. Lavocat, "Narratives of Catastrophe", p. 277.

62. Raymundo Padilla Lozoya, "La estrategia simbólica ante amenazas naturales y desastres entre España y México", *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 35 (2017), pp. 116-148.

63. Lavocat, "Narratives of Catastrophe", p. 271.

GENNARO VARRIALE

Heroes at the Epicentre: Our Lady and Saints in the Earthquakes of the Hispanic Monarchy (16th-17th Century)*

1. *Introduction: the transmission of information in the Hispanic Monarchy*

Ya escribi a Vuestra Señoría el temblor de Lima y su ruina
digose que en Napoles a suzedido lo mismo
[...] y mas dizen que en las yslas de Canarias a suzedido lo mismo
y que se an sumergido dos.¹

In the summer of 1688, the Madrid court was struck by devastating news arriving at almost the same time from Lima and Naples. The letters informed Charles II that earthquakes had destroyed two of the wealthiest and most important cities of the Hispanic Monarchy. In actuality, the disasters occurred at a distance of eight months from each other: the Lima earthquake on 20 October 1687, and the disaster with its epicentre in Samnium on 5 June 1688. Notices from the New World generally took months to reach the court, and in the case of the Peru earthquake, the arrival of the news in Madrid was further delayed by a particular circumstance. The viceroy had in fact sent off the official dispatches the very day before the disaster, “el día 19 de octubre deste año a las seis de la tarde salió del Puerto de Callao la Armada para Panama, con cuya ocasion despaché

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1. Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza, *Osuna*, CT. 52, D. 2, s.f. Juan Ibáñez to the Marquis of Tavera, Madrid (10 July 1688).

el Aviso”.² The concomitant arrival of the terrible news gave rise to all kinds of speculation: divine punishment had struck two dominions of His Majesty more than 10,000 kilometres distant from each other.³

The words cited in the incipit to this chapter are taken from a letter sent by Juan Ibáñez to the Marquis of Tavera, Antonio de Toledo Osorio. The nobleman’s agent, who was resident in Madrid, maintained an intense correspondence with his patron from 1687 to 1696, informing him of the most important current events: the social tensions in Catalonia, the movements of the corsairs in the Mediterranean, the imperial victories in the Balkans or the financial difficulties of the Crown. For at least a decade, Juan Ibáñez cultivated his contacts with the most influential politicians in the capital, who often passed on to him information of interest to the Marquis of Tavera. As regards the events of 1687-1688, as scholars are well aware, it was the king himself who sent peremptory orders that the sad news of the two earthquakes be made rapidly known in the four corners of the Hispanic Monarchy.⁴

By the early days of June 1688, the destruction of Lima and Naples was already common knowledge in Madrid. According to Juan Ibáñez, the often-confused information about the two earthquakes was the talk of the town, and there were even rumours about a tsunami that had swallowed up a couple of the Canary Islands. In the meantime, the agent reported that the authorities had not suspended the bullfights, “con todo esto prosigue la fiesta de toros, sobre esto se ofrezca mucho que dezir”, letting slip a not overly veiled censure of Charles II, who was by then a constant target of popular criticism. So, the earthquakes of Lima and Naples were hot topics at the time in the packed taverns or among the public at the bullfights.⁵

Disasters attracted a transversal interest in early modern societies, since most coeval interpretations of natural catastrophes were bound up with the religious and moral dimensions. Due to their unpredictability, earthquakes became a major component in a literary genre of marked

2. Archivo General de Indias (henceforth AGI), *Lima*, 87, no. 27. Duke of Palata to Charles II, Lima (8 December 1687).

3. Armando Alberola Romá, “Terremotos, memoria y miedo en la Valencia de la edad moderna”, *Estudis. Revista de Historia Moderna*, 38 (2012), pp. 55-75.

4. Domenico Cecere, “‘Subterranea conspiración’. Terremoti, comunicazione e politica nella monarchia di Carlo II”, *Studi Storici. Rivista trimestrale dell’Istituto Gramsci*, 4 (2019), pp. 811-843.

5. John-Paul Ghobrial, *The Whispers of Cities: Information Flows in Istanbul, London, and Paris in the Age of William Trumbull*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

sensationalism that was notching up ever greater market shares.⁶ In addition to Peru and the Kingdom of Naples, the Habsburgs also reigned over other territories of elevated seismic risk, such as Mesoamerica, Sicily and the Philippines, so that – as far back as the time of Emperor Charles V – the establishment was forced to make a massive heuristic effort to understand the reasons for earthquakes that occurred sometimes an ocean beyond the sovereign’s court.⁷

Although news of the earthquakes travelled in myriad ways, the politicians in charge of the Hispanic Monarchy tended to pursue a system of verification and refinement of the information sent directly from the regions struck by a natural catastrophe. The main objective of this internal administrative procedure was to arrive at reliable data that would make it possible to make the decisions best tailored to the interests of the dynasty: “no se padeziese algun horror en perjuico de la Real Hazienda de Vuestra Majestad”.⁸ Founded on reciprocal trust between sender and recipient, the collection of news implied corroboration of the data amongst the different levels of the administration. The procedure began with a report from the magistrate closest to the epicentre of the earthquake, which was then transmitted to the relevant institution where the text was examined before passing the news on to a higher body. In this way, the inner circle of the monarch could, in theory, count on having the most reliable information about every catastrophic event.⁹ In the records of the first meeting about the Naples earthquake of 1688, the Council of Italy assured Charles II that the information provided had been verified by various sources: “todos los avisos comprueban”.¹⁰

Based largely on manuscript documentation now conserved in the Archivio di Stato of Naples and several Spanish institutions, the purpose

6. Henry Ettinghausen, *How the Press Began: The Pre-Periodical Printed News in Early Modern Europe*, A Coruña, SIELAE, 2015.

7. Arndt Brendecke, *Imperio e información. Funciones del saber en el dominio colonial español*, Madrid-Frankfurt, Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2012.

8. Archivo General de Simancas (henceforth AGS), *Secretarías Provinciales*, leg. 56, s.f. Proceedings of the Council of Italy, Madrid (20 September 1688).

9. Gennaro Varriale, “Quando trema l’impero. L’informazione sui terremoti nella Monarchia Ispanica (secoli XVI-XVII)”, *Mediterranea. Ricerche Storiche*, 51 (2021), pp. 147-176.

10. AGS, *Secretarías Provinciales*, leg. 56, s.f. Proceedings of the Council of Italy, Madrid (9 July 1688).

of this article is to record the frequency of heroic actions performed by Our Lady or saints in the confidential dispatches concerning earthquakes that circulated between the various organs of the Habsburg administration. Moreover, the planetary extension of the Hispanic Monarchy gives the study a global perspective that highlights the presence of models and the continuation of the phenomenon over time, despite the indisputable changes in circumstances over the course of the two centuries. To this end, the chapter is divided into three parts, plus this introduction and a conclusion. The first section discusses the dominant interpretation of the telluric movements in this period, ranging from religious readings to naturalistic studies. The second addresses the various devotional manifestations organised in the communities struck by earthquake to invoke divine clemency. The third then considers the testimony of the survivors who assure that they were saved through celestial aid.

2. *Earthquakes: natural unpredictability or divine castigation*

Heated debates between scholars and academics about the environmental causes of seismic activity were frequent in the early modern period, although in *ancien régime* societies the most common interpretation of natural disasters continued to be subordinated to divine intervention. On 4 September 1679, for instance, a typical letter arrived at the Madrid court from the Philippines, which regularly fell victim to earthquakes. In the missive, the Audiencia of Manila illustrated the dramatic situation of this region at the ends of the earth, which was now further aggravated by the effects of a devastating earthquake that had taken place in December 1677. The local magistrates on the Asiatic frontier had no doubts about the origin of the catastrophe: “fue Nuestro Señor servido de que temblase la tierra con tanta fuerza que se vio esta Republica en el maior desconsuelo”.¹¹

In the first week of November 1659, on the other hand, an earthquake razed the province of Calabria Ultra to the ground. The news forwarded from Naples to the court of Philip IV was appalling. The viceroy, Count of Peñaranda, confirmed the collapse of buildings and monasteries

11. AGI, *Filipinas*, 23, r. 17, no. 53. Audiencia of Manila to Charles II, Manila (4 June 1678).

throughout the territory, where the number of deaths was devastating.¹² The news of the Calabrian quake was discussed in the Council of Italy for the first time on 29 January of the following year. In addition to supporting the reconstruction effort, the Council also invited the viceroy to implement stringent repressive measures to counter the crimes and sins of the Neapolitan people, since this was “uno de los medios mas eficazes para aplacar a Dios haziendose oraciones particulares predique y exorte la enmienda de costumbres”.¹³

Unlike us, as we have inherited 19th-century positivism, contemporaries of these events saw no dichotomy between the religious reading and empirical interpretations of the origin of earthquakes. Among the disasters that occurred under the Habsburg dynasty, the one most emblematic of this epistemological coexistence was, in all probability, the academic and social debate that sought to explain the earthquakes and the eruption in the Phlegraean Fields in 1538. In the first place, this event made Monte Nuovo a crucial benchmark in all the studies on natural calamities written in the following centuries.¹⁴ In 1779, the Montpellier scholar Pierre Bertholon de Saint-Lazare drew up a report reconstructing the history and causes of seismic activity that was sent to the Madrid court, where a new dynasty, the Bourbons, had been in power for over seventy years. Written in French and addressed to King Charles III, the text mentioned the disasters passed down by Aristotle, Thucydides and Strabo, going on to cite Monte Nuovo as the only significant early modern example for the interpretation of earthquakes. The author underscored the force of Phlegraean eruption that had completely transformed the panorama of the territory: “un tremblement prodigieux fit disparoitre le lac Lucrin, Tripergole fut abysmé et ses malheureux habitans engloutis”.¹⁵

The earthquakes and the ensuing eruption took place in the 1530s, making the destruction caused by Monte Nuovo a major testing ground

12. AGS, *Secretarías Provinciales*, leg. 30, s.f. Count of Peñaranda to Philip IV, Naples (29 November 1659).

13. *Ibid.*, Proceedings of the Council of Italy, Madrid (29 January 1660).

14. Gennaro Varriale, “D’improvviso un monte nuovo alle porte di Napoli. L’eruzione flegrea del 1538”, *Studi Storici. Rivista trimestrale dell’Istituto Gramsci*, 4 (2019), pp. 781-809.

15. Archivo Histórico Nacional (henceforth AHN), *Estado*, leg. 2927, no. 298. *Memoire sur les para-tremblemens de terre et les para-volcans par M.^r Bertholon prêtre de la mission des Academies Royales des Sciences de Montpellier, Lyon, Marseille, Dijon, Beziers, Nismes, Bordeaux, Toulouse, Rome, Hesse-Hombourg, Béziers* (19 August 1779).

for the empire of Charles V at the height of the struggle against Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent.¹⁶ The quakes had taken place in an area close to the capital of Naples which, during the mandate of Viceroy Toledo, had become pivotal to the Habsburg machinery in the Mediterranean, especially in an anti-Ottoman sense.¹⁷ Following the eruption, the viceregal court sponsored the creation of a task force mandated with illustrating the origin of the catastrophic event to the terrified community. Pedro de Toledo entrusted this urgent commission to the *philosopher* Simone Porzio, one of the most authoritative academics in Naples at the time.¹⁸ Starting from the first manuscript presented to the viceroy, the scholar defended the peripatetic interpretation of earthquakes, whereby the seismic tremors were caused by underground winds, hence adopting a stance that ruled out any intervention of the Almighty: “la causa è certa et della natura producta et per l’ordine dele cause naturale”.¹⁹ In view of his prestige, Simone Porzio monopolised the debate that engaged the various strata of Neapolitan society in those frenzied months, since the eruption represented a substantial novelty “per essersi estinta in tutto la memoria dell’incendio di Somma”.²⁰ According to Francesco del Nero, a Tuscan merchant who lived in the shadow of Vesuvius, Pedro de Toledo gave precise instructions to the Neapolitan workmen to dig “infinità di pozzi profondissimi fra Napoli e Pozzuoli” in such a way as to allow the underground exhalations to escape more easily.²¹ During the early modern period, the ideas of Aristotle, reinterpreted by St Thomas Aquinas, represented the dominant interpretative paradigm for the origin of earthquakes. More than a century later, in 1651, the

16. Özlem Kumrular, *El duelo entre Carlos V y Solimán el Magnífico (1520-1535)*, Istanbul, ISIS, 2005.

17. Gennaro Varriale, *Arrivano li Turchi. Guerra navale e spionaggio nel Mediterraneo (1532-1582)*, Novi Ligure, Città del Silenzio, 2014.

18. Eva Del Soldato, *Simone Porzio. Un aristotelico tra natura e grazia*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010.

19. AGS, *Patronato Real*, leg. 42, d. 7 (f. 1.). *Parecer de Simón Porco que embia el Visorey de Nápoles*, 1538.

20. Giovanni Antonio Summonte, *Historia della Città e Regno di Napoli*, vol. V, book VIII, Naples, Stamperie di Giuseppe Raimondi e Domenico Vivenzio, 1749, p. 230.

21. “Lettera di Francesco Del Nero a Niccolò Del Benino, sul terremoto di Pozzuolo, dal quale ebbe origine la Montagna Nuova, nel 1538”, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 9 (1846), pp. 92-96: 95-96.

inhabitants of Santiago de Guatemala, now Antigua, even dug wells in their private gardens in the hope that this would arrest the quakes.²²

Despite accepting Simone Porzio's theories, in 1538 Pedro de Toledo also fostered the organisation of religious processions that passed through the most symbolic sites in Naples to appease the divine wrath. From the pulpits of the churches, various ecclesiastics delivered fiery sermons against an immoral society that had forced God to "castigar le scelleratezze umane".²³ The Milanese printer Francesco Marchesino, who was an eyewitness of the disaster, recalled in particular a liturgical cortege in which Viceroy Toledo took part. During this procession, the clergy, followed by a throng of the faithful, carried the head of St Gennaro to the place where local tradition held that the saint had been decapitated.²⁴

One particular question frequently arose among the members of imperial elite: why did God choose to strike the subjects of the very dynasty that was most strenuously engaged in the defence of Catholicism? After the Samnium earthquake in 1688, the ecclesiastical hierarchy explained to the viceregal administration that it was the lottery, known as *beneficiata*, which was the main cause of divine anger against Naples, since the desire for easy money had led to the proliferation of sinful behaviour among the citizens.²⁵ On 3 August, for the second time, the Council of State devoted the entire discussion to the order suspending the lottery issued by the Viceroy of Naples, the Count of Santisteban. The debate revolved around the report submitted by the Council of Italy, which had already expressed the various positions adopted regarding the viceroy's suspension of the *beneficiata*. The clergy energetically championed its definitive abolition, and Cardinal Marcello Durazzo, the apostolic nuncio in Madrid, became the most authoritative spokesman for the requests of the Holy See. The Count of Santisteban,

22. Cristina Zilbermann De Luján, *Aspectos socioeconómicos del traslado de la ciudad de Guatemala (1773-1783)*, Guatemala, Academia de Geografía e Historia de Guatemala, 1987, p. 16.

23. Antonino Castaldo, *Delle Istorie di notar Antonino Castaldo. Libri quattro ne' quali si descrivono gli avvenimenti più memorabili succeduti nel Regno di Napoli sotto il Governo del Viceré D. Pietro de Toledo e de' Viceré suoi successori fino al Cardinal Granvela*, Naples, Gravier, 1769, p. 65.

24. Francesco Marchesino, *Copia de Una lettera di Napoli che contiene li stupendi, et gran prodigii apparsi sopra a Pozzolo*, Naples, 1538 [5 October].

25. Alessandro Tuccillo, "Abolire il gioco per placare l'ira divina. La diplomazia pontificia e il terremoto del 1688 a Napoli", *Mediterranea. Ricerche Storiche*, 51 (2021), pp. 177-202.

however, had suspended the lottery more to avoid dangerous crowding than to placate divine anger. He submitted the decision to the consideration of the court, after having already declared his own position in a meeting of the *Consiglio Collaterale*, the principal institution of the Kingdom of Naples: “la beneficiada no sea la causa de terremoto”.²⁶ Nevertheless, the only real opponent of the suppression of the lottery was Luis Francisco de la Cerda Aragón, ambassador of Charles II in Rome, since the proceeds of the *beneficiata* were largely “destinados en este a la embaxada”.²⁷

Apropos the earlier question (why against us, in particular?), the most revealing observation made in the Council of State was that of the Admiral of Castille, Juan Gaspar Enríquez de Cabrera y Sandoval. In his opinion, God punished *in primis* the injustice of the governors; for instance, France had not suffered natural disasters for years, despite the fact that there was not a single true Catholic in the entire kingdom there. To underpin his conviction, the admiral cited the story of the mystic “doña Marina de Escobar quando pregunto a Nuestro Señor como favorecia tanto al Rey de Suecia y la respondió, que quieres que haga si administra justicia”.²⁸

An immoral action on the part of a governor could even brand a territory for eternity. In 1619, the court of Philip III discussed a letter sent by the *cabildo* of León, in Nicaragua, requesting the king’s permission to move the city to another place, close to the indigenous village of Sutiaba. This operation was quite common in the New World when a site was considered uninhabitable due to the frequency of strong earthquakes, the proximity of an active volcano or the endemic presence of disease.²⁹ Nine years earlier, the city had been flagellated by yet another earthquake that had reduced the place to rubble. To corroborate their petition, the local authorities assured the sovereign that the area was cursed: not only had the

26. Archivio di Stato di Napoli (henceforth ASN), *Consiglio Collaterale, Risoluzioni e proposte*, vol. 52, f. 182v. Consiglio Collaterale, Naples (9 June 1688).

27. AGS, *Estado*, leg. 3319, f. 83. Meeting of the Council of State, Madrid (11 July 1688).

28. *Ibid.*, f. 86. Meeting of the Council of State, Madrid (3 August 1688). On the mystic Marina de Escobar, see Isabelle Poutrin, “Una lección de teología moderna: la vida maravillosa de doña Marina de Escobar (1665)”, *Historia Social*, 57 (2007), pp. 127-143.

29. Alain Musset, “Mudarse o desaparecer. Traslado de ciudades hispanoamericanas y desastres (siglos XVI-XVII)”, in *Historia y desastres en América Latina*, ed. by Virginia García Acosta, 2 vols, vol. I, Lima, Red & CIESAS, 1996, pp. 23-45.

inhabitants frequently suffered the destruction caused by earthquakes, but the livestock too was subject to continual infections, and, to cap it all, the insalubrious air prevented the birth of healthy children.

Why did God scourge the poor inhabitants of distant León? The members of the *cabildo* had no doubts on this score: “un tirano mato al obispo de la dicha ciudad y desde entonces es sitio maldito y descomulgado”.³⁰ This was a reference to an episode that had taken place about seventy years earlier, which is fairly well known among scholars of colonial history. In 1550, a group of assassins headed by the governor stabbed to death the bishop Antonio de Valdivieso, a Dominican and follower of Bartolomé de las Casas, who sought to improve the conditions of the natives.³¹ The person responsible for the murder, a highly idiosyncratic character, then led a rebellion against the Crown with the aim of re-establishing the Inca Empire under his own aegis, in the wake of the revolt led several years earlier by Gonzalo Pizarro against the Laws of the Indies.³² From our perspective, the most interesting aspect of the letter is the language used. The writer in fact supported León’s request to the monarch by leveraging reference to the two most important sources in early modern Europe: Christianity and classical history. Not incidentally, the report used the word “tyrant” to describe Hernando de Contreras, which would have called to the mind of Philip III the despots of the Greco-Roman age. In the end, the Council of the Indies accepted the plea of the *cabildo*, and the inhabitants were able to leave the accursed site. Since 1967, the ruins of León Viejo have been declared a heritage of national interest by the Republic of Nicaragua.

Given that natural disasters were the expression of divine will, seismic tremors were sometimes preceded by sidereal portents; in the accounts of scholars and survivors, the most recurrent sign was the appearance of a comet.³³ In early modern societies, astrology was considered a field of study

30. AGI, *Guatemala*, 43, no. 26. The city of León to Philip III, León (9 March 1619).

31. Guido Clemente Martínez, *Fray Antonio de Valdivieso: precursor del derecho de gentes en América*, Managua, Alcaldía de Managua, 2018.

32. Carmen Mena-García, “Justicia a los rebeldes. Relación de los sentenciados por el alzamiento de los segovianos Hernando y Pedro de Contreras”, in *Proyección y presencia de Segovia en América*, ed. by Mariano Cuesta Domingo, Segovia, Ayuntamiento de Segovia, 1992, pp. 72-92.

33. Gerrit Jasper Schenk, “Dis-astri. Modelli interpretativi delle calamità naturali dal Medioevo al Rinascimento”, in *Le calamità ambientali nel tardo Medioevo europeo*.

on par with any other science, and, in effect, predictions and horoscopes had decisive implications for the political scene.³⁴ Moreover, according to the Christian sacred texts, not only did earthquakes derive from God's anger, but portentous events were heralded by telluric activity. In this respect, the most authoritative source was the Gospel of Matthew, where several lines mention brusque movements of the earth as an unequivocal sign of the arrival of Jesus.³⁵

Consequently, in the discourse of this period, it was not rare for seismic tremors to be the prelude to greater evils. In the documentation of the Habsburg administration, however, the notion of an earthquake as a baleful omen was greatly influenced by the site of the epicentre: when one of the domains of the dynasty was struck by earthquake, the writers of the official dispatches tended to downplay such opinions. The proceedings of the Council of Italy meeting held on 23 July 1688 branded as superstitious the numerous inhabitants of Naples who had abandoned their homes because they were terrified by the catastrophic predictions of the astrologers: "ha sido ligereza dejarse llevar de los pronosticos que les anunciaban fatalidades de la ciudad".³⁶

Conversely, the representatives of His Majesty appeared inclined to accept the possibility that the earthquake was a presage of future adversities if the affected site was under the realm of a different sovereign. On Holy Wednesday 1580, the earth suddenly began to quake on both sides of the Channel; the English, French and Flemish have left abundant evidence of an event that was very rare in this area, which is now known by specialists as the Dover Straits earthquake.³⁷ The tremors caused enormous damage in London, where chimneys collapsed along with one of the steeples of Westminster Abbey, although the only known

Realtà, percezioni, reazioni, ed. by Gian Maria Varanini, Giuliano Pinto, Gabriella Piccinini and Michael Matheus, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2010, pp. 23-75.

34. Monica Azzolini, *The Duke and the Stars: Astrology and Politics in Renaissance Milan*, Cambridge-London, Harvard University Press, 2013.

35. Patricia Simons, "Desire after Disaster: Lot and His Daughters", in *Disaster, Death and the Emotions in the Shadow of the Apocalypse, 1400-1700*, ed. by Jennifer Spinks and Charles Zika, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 201-223.

36. AGS, *Secretarias Provinciales*, leg. 56, s.f. Proceedings of the Council of Italy, Madrid (23 July 1688); Giuseppe Galasso, *L'altra Europa. Per un'antropologia storica del Mezzogiorno d'Italia*, Naples, Guida, 2009, pp. 71-127.

37. Roger M. W. Musson, "A Critical History of British Earthquakes", *Annals of Geophysics*, 47/2-3 (2004), pp. 597-609.

victims were two children struck by rubble falling from a church.³⁸ The terrible earthquake became a talking point in the streets of London. In view of the widespread interest, in the following months several city publishers printed broadsides and pamphlets about the event; years later, William Shakespeare himself made an allusion to it in *Romeo and Juliet*: “’Tis since the earthquake now eleven years”.³⁹ Just three days after the tremors, the ambassador of Philip II at the court of Elizabeth I, Bernardino de Mendoza, informed his king of the earthquake that many commentators believed would be the harbinger of further misadventures: “el miedo con que a quedado la gente es bien grande teniendolo por ruin aguero del benilles algun gran mal”.⁴⁰

From the angle of the Hispanic Monarchy, without a shadow of doubt the homeland of superstition was the Ottoman Empire, the sworn enemy of the Habsburgs. On 10 August 1564, Garci Hernández – secretary to the embassy in Venice, Europe’s window on the Levant – sent a letter to Philip II. The dispatch revealed the latest news sent from Constantinople, where word had arrived of an earthquake that had destroyed the holy city of Mecca, so that the sultan and his entourage “estavan mal contentos, y lo tenian por mal agurio”.⁴¹ The art of divination and prophecies were not a prerogative of Christian Europe, and indeed astrologers were held in great esteem in Topkapi Palace. Although the ideas of the Divan, the chief organ of the Ottoman government, were deemed to be based on superstition, in his missive Garci Hernández nevertheless allowed the hope to transpire that the soothsayers might be right. An inauspicious portent for the Turks would mean a good augury for His Majesty in the Mediterranean.⁴²

38. Darin Hayton, “Pamphlets on the Earthquake of 1580”, (2013), blog, <https://dhayton.haverford.edu/blog/2013/07/17/pamphlets-on-the-earthquake-of-1580/> (accessed 24 March 2021).

39. William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, ed. by Sidney Lamb, New York, Hungry Minds, 2000, act I, scene III, p. 46.

40. AGS, *Estado*, leg. 1523, f. 102. Bernardino de Mendoza to Philip II, London (9 April 1580).

41. *Ibid.*, leg. 1325, f. 34. Garci Hernández to Philip II, Venice (10 August 1564).

42. Cornell H. Fleischer, “Shadows of Shadows: Prophecy in Politics in 1530s Istanbul”, *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, 13 (2007), pp. 51-62.

3. *Invoking clemency: the processions*

The leitmotif of the written reports on the occurrence of an earthquake was the physical and moral desolation of the territories struck by it.⁴³ In the face of God's anger, the survivors had only one option: repentance. In 1560, the *Consell General* – one of the most important organs of government in Valencia – decreed the posting of an announcement convening the entire population to a procession “per placar e mitigar la indignacio ira e furor de nostre señor deu”.⁴⁴ A similar religious manifestation was, moreover, announced for the earthquakes that had struck another of His Majesty's possessions: nearby Catalonia. The edict provided precise details about the route of the procession, to be led by the image of Our Lady of the Forsaken, which is still greatly venerated in the city, ending in the cathedral where there would be “haura solemne sermo e prehicara lo Reverent e honest religios frare Matheu de orde dels frares menors”.⁴⁵

Despite the lottery having already been abolished in Naples, in September 1694 another powerful earthquake ravaged the tormented city, just six years after the previous one that had caused dozens of deaths and grievous losses. One week after the first major quake, the members of the *Consiglio Collaterale* held a meeting to assess the damage and address a situation that was, once again, critical. During the discussion, the Neapolitan magistrates explicitly asked Viceroy Santisteban to get in touch with the archbishop, Giacomo Cantelmo, as soon as possible to coordinate the organisation of the liturgical events necessary to appease the divine wrath: “se sirva Su Eminencia de establecer y ordenar oraciones y Divinos officios en las iglesias”.⁴⁶ The Council's urgent request assumed the consolidated notion that the visible collaboration between the secular institutions and the ecclesiastical hierarchy would, in the eyes of God, be the most convincing demonstration of collective repentance.

43. Françoise Lavocat, “Narratives of Catastrophe in the Early Modern Period: Awareness of Historicity and Emergence of Interpretative Viewpoints”, *Poetics Today*, 33/3-4 (2012), pp. 253-299.

44. Arxiu Municipal de València, *Pregones o crides*, x.x-1, f. 138v. Announcement for the procession, Valencia (1560).

45. *Ibid.*, f. 139r.

46. ASN, *Consiglio Collaterale, Risoluzioni e proposte*, vol. 73, f. 41r. Consiglio Collaterale to the Viceroy Count of Santisteban, Naples (15 September 1694).

On 20 June 1698, an earthquake destroyed the area around Quito, although the tremors were scarcely felt in the capital itself. Ten days later, an anonymous report summarising the tragic situation was compiled and sent to Madrid: the towns of Riobamba, Latacunga, Ambato and Patate had been reduced to rubble, the fields had become rivers of mud and hundreds of people had died. In the first place, the evidence from Quito confirmed to the court that, as soon as the news reached the capital, the political authorities and the clergy had organised a procession with “la ymagen de Maria Santissima que fue acompañada de los Santos Patronos [...] la nobleza y demas gentío entonando el rosario a coros por las calles”. The report openly declared the aim of the ritual: “esperamos que Dios nuestro señor ha de perdonar nuestras culpas por la yntercesion de su madre santissima”.⁴⁷ The highly detailed report contained one piece of information that would have surprised the reader: according to many witnesses, the earthquakes had been heralded by a miraculous event when, just a few days earlier, a painted image of Our Lady had wept tears of blood.⁴⁸

The almost total devastation of the area and the hundreds of corpses sparked all manner of speculation about the reasons for the earthquake. In September, another manuscript was drafted – alas, this too anonymous – which pointed out something rather peculiar: the earthquake had not struck any of the indigenous communities. As a result, word began to go round the inhabitants of Quito that God had wished to punish “los españoles quizá por los agravios y extorsiones que ellos hacen a los pobres indios”.⁴⁹ To support this idea, the writer also added that the Jesuit convent was the only building left standing in Patate, since the monks had continuously denounced the abuse of the natives. The interpretation was very similar to that made ten years earlier by the Admiral of Castille at the meeting of the Council of State on the abolition of the *beneficiata*: rather than infidels or heretics, God punished the wicked behaviour of Catholics. The rumour spread like wildfire among the terrorised inhabitants of Quito, and the bishop of the city summoned an Indian woman who had had a vision, namely that between “la fiesta de San Batholome a la de San Andres se havia de asolar Quito”.⁵⁰

47. AHN, *Diversos, Colecciones*, leg. 27, no. 58, f. 2r. First report, Quito (30 June 1698).

48. *Ibid.*, f. 1v.

49. *Ibid.*, f. 2r. Second report, Quito (September 1698).

50. *Ibid.*, ff. 2r-v.

After the first procession, the bishop of Quito announced three days of public penance in the course of which the religious orders paraded through the streets of the city with the relics and sacred images that were conserved in their monasteries.⁵¹ The rivalry between saints was a fairly common phenomenon on the colonial frontiers.⁵² After a natural catastrophe, the various congregations present in the territory would begin to push the idea that the saint or the image of Our Lady of their particular convent was the one best suited to abate God's anger. In addition to garnering greater prestige for the order, the selection of the intercessor also had decisive economic implications, since an increase in popular devotion signified more conspicuous donations.⁵³

Generally, a community's veneration of a particular relic or sacred image was much more consolidated in the Old World than in the Americas. This made turnover more difficult, although certain catastrophic episodes did lead to the change of patron or the choice of a new saint deemed to be more effective against a particular type of disaster.⁵⁴ In late 1620, the town of Alcoy in the Kingdom of Valencia was ripped open by an earthquake that caused massive damage and that left a wake of desolation in the region. Over two months later, the Marquis of Tavera confessed disconsolately to Philip IV that "vi ocularmente la gran ruyna de edificios y otros daños que recibieron".⁵⁵ Terrified by the earthquake swarm, on 3 December 1620 the inhabitants of Alcoy called a meeting of the Consell General at which they decided to entrust themselves to the saint of the day, St Maurus the Martyr, to protect the town from divine castigation. Over a year after

51. Giulio Sodano, *Il miracolo nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia dell'età moderna. Tra Santi, Madonne, guaritrici e medici*, Naples, Guida, 2010, pp. 15-103.

52. Mario Hugo Cuéllar Meléndez, "La lucha de los Santos. Corporaciones e imágenes religiosas vinculadas a la inundación de 1629 en la Ciudad de México", *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 35 (2017), pp. 149-177.

53. Carlos M. Gálvez Peña, "Forjar santos en el Perú del siglo XVII. Representación política, agencia criolla y cultura letrada virreinal", in *A la luz de Roma, Santos y santidad en el barroco iberoamericano*, ed. by Fernando Quiles García, José Jaime García Bernal, Paolo Broggio and Marcello Fagiolo Dell'Arco, 3 vols, vol. III, Seville-Rome, Universidad Pablo de Olavide-Università Roma Tre, 2020, pp. 67-85.

54. Ida Mauro, "La diffusione del culto di san Francesco Borgia a Napoli tra feste pubbliche e orgoglio nobiliare", *Revista Borja. Revista de l'Institut Internacional d'Estudis Borgians*, 4 (2012), pp. 549-560.

55. Archivo de la Corona de Aragón (henceforth ACA), *Consejo de Aragón*, leg. 707, no. 44. Marquis of Tavera to Philip IV, Valencia (23 February 1621).

the catastrophe, a committee of inhabitants and local clergy travelled to Valencia to request a special relic from the city's ecclesiastical hierarchy. A finger of St Maurus, which had been given to the Patriarch Juan de Ribera long before by Pope Clement VII, was in fact conserved in the college of Corpus Christi in Valencia. The petition was granted, so that the group was able to return exultant to Alcoy where the relic was thereafter publicly displayed on the saint's feast day, the anniversary of the earthquake.⁵⁶

In addition to the confraternities, in the cities of the early modern period there were also other sites of social gathering, such as the communities of foreigners with legal status or the guilds whose members met with a certain frequency. The bonds linking these groups could be based on reasons of a profane character, or the members might profess a shared devotion towards a sacred image conserved in one of their chapels.⁵⁷ When a natural disaster occurred, the guilds or the communities of foreigners organised processions in the hope of obtaining help from their patron saint.

In Habsburg Naples, there were a multitude of foreign communities, among which the Hispanic *nationes* were always the most influential.⁵⁸ The Castilians had a church in a central location in the city: San Giacomo degli Spagnoli. According to the proceedings of a meeting of the Council of Italy, after the earthquake of 1688 the Cardinal of Naples organised a procession in the area around the cathedral, albeit with a restricted number of people to avoid dangerous crowds, while “la de Santiago de los Españoles se havia hecho el dia antecedente en la forma acostumbrada de que tubo el pueblo mucho consuelo”.⁵⁹ A couple of weeks earlier, the members of the same Council had proposed to King Charles II that he should choose a church in Madrid to celebrate a mass in honour of the patron saint of Naples “con invocación a San Genaro”.⁶⁰

The ceremonial and chief features of Catholic processions persisted substantially unchanged throughout the early modern period, while the

56. José Luís Santonja Cardona, *Iglesia y sociedad en una villa valenciana: Alcoi (1300-1845)*, PhD dissertation, Alicante, Universitat d'Alacant, 1998, p. 466.

57. Gervase Rosser, *The Art of Solidarity in the Middle Ages: Guilds in England 1250-1550*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015.

58. Piero Ventura, *La capitale dei privilegi: governo spagnolo, burocrazia e cittadinanza a Napoli nel Cinquecento*, Naples, Federico II University Press, 2018.

59. AGS, *Secretarías Provinciales*, leg. 56, s.f. Proceedings of the Consejo de Italia, Madrid (23 July 1688).

60. *Ibid.* (9 July 1688).

first globalisation – spearheaded by the Habsburgs and by the Portuguese House of Aviz – spread the Roman liturgy at planetary level. Latin America definitely represented the most emblematic space of a global phenomenon based on the imposition of a new faith, but the devotional representations of the region sometimes displayed an osmosis between conquerors and natives.⁶¹ In April 1689, a letter from the Archbishop of Lima, Melchor Liñán y Cisneros, concerning the earthquake that had taken place two years earlier, finally arrived at the Madrid court. More than a letter to the king, the communication consisted rather of a lengthy report in which the archbishop recorded the situation almost two months after the disastrous quake, “su movimiento que se reconoció en distancia de mas de 700 leguas”.⁶²

Don Melchor was a pivotal figure in the history of Lima, and he recounted the earthquake of 1687 to the king from a particular perspective. Indeed, following the first tremor, the archbishop had been buried under the rubble of a house that collapsed in the port of Callao, where his doctor had sent him to rest on account of a respiratory illness. Having been pulled out alive amidst piles of debris, the sick and now also wounded archbishop was immediately transported to a spot distant from the coast. As a result, Don Melchor escaped in the nick of time the ensuing tsunami that caused a huge number of deaths in Callao. From the “penosa prision de mi cama”, the archbishop sought to support the spontaneous reactions of religious devotion and public penitence that spread like wildfire through the city, “los hábitos de mortificación que los del visitieron, con las procesiones que formaron y con las cruces y coronas de espinas”.⁶³ According to the archbishop, in the days immediately following, the streets of Lima were filled with various processions organised by the parish churches and monastic orders. More specifically, Don Melchor reported to Charles II that “salido de su tabernaculo y iglesia de San Agustín el milagroso trasumpto del Santo Cristo de Burgos traducido de los Reynos de España a este mas à de un siglo”. Thus, the City of the Kings sought the help of one of the oldest relics in the American continent. In the same letter, the archbishop also informed the sovereign about the situation and reactions

61. Serge Gruzinski, *El pensamiento mestizo. Cultura amerindia y civilización del Renacimiento*, Barcelona, Paidós, 2007.

62. AGI, Lima, 304, no. 11. Melchor Liñán y Cisneros to Charles II, Lima (3 December 1687).

63. *Ibid.*

in the surrounding areas. The Bishop of Cuzco, for instance, had ordered “la milagrosa imagen de Christo” donated by Emperor Charles V to be brought out of the splendid cathedral.⁶⁴

The accounts from the epicentres reveal that sometimes the faithful were obliged to house sacred images and relics in precarious conditions because the tremors had destroyed the churches or made them unsafe. It is very likely that readers would have been most distraught by such sacrilegious situations. On 16 January 1644, an earthquake demolished Pamplona in the Kingdom of the New Granada, now in Colombia. The municipal *cabildo* appointed Lorenzo Llanos Cifuentes as general procurator, mandated to collect the information to be forwarded first to the Audiencia of Santa Fe and then to the royal court. In July, Lorenzo Llanos submitted a report, drawn up by the scribe of the city, containing the statements made by the survivors, most of whom recalled an image that was felt to be deeply distressing: “el santissimo sacramento de la parrochial esta con otras Reliquias en la plaza de vaxo de unos tolditos de manta”.⁶⁵

The disturbing news was not restricted to sacrilegious situations; some witnesses even claimed the presence of demonic figures at the centre of the earthquake. In the summer of 1586, the Flanders area – and the city of Ghent, in particular – was struck by an earthquake. The priest Pedro de León wrote from Brussels to the Venetian ambassador Cristóbal de Salazar informing him of the event. The letter confirmed the political tension in Flanders, which was immersed in the rebellion against Philip II. The writer himself described how he had been captured by the Protestants, who had released him thanks to the intermediation of an English diplomat. Finally, regarding the earthquake, Pedro León confirmed the terrible rumours communicated by other ecclesiastics who were deemed reliable. The survivors of Ghent described apocalyptic scenes: “vian al diablo visiblemente que mudo una casa entera de un lugar a otro, y hizo que dos hombres se matasen, tambien atormentava a una muger, y llevo a un viejo grande espacio en bolandillas”.⁶⁶

64. *Ibid.*

65. AGI, *Santa Fe*, 66, n. 141, s.f. Evidence of the royal officials, Pamplona (30 July 1644).

66. AGS, *Estado*, leg. 1538, f. 191. Pedro de León to Cristóbal Salazar, Brussels (1 September 1586).

4. *The survivors' evidence*

Therefore, following an earthquake, the various levels of the Habsburg administration had at their disposal a range of written communications from the areas that had been struck, foremost among them the personal testimony of the survivors. More than other sources, the often distraught reconstructions of the survivors triggered a more emotional reaction in the readers, who felt themselves defenceless in the face of God's anger.⁶⁷ On 26 June 1656, the Duke of Montalto, Viceroy of Valencia, notified the Council of Aragon – the benchmark institution for the kingdom – that an earthquake had destroyed the area around Ademuz, “derribo el castillo, la iglesia, la casa de la villa, y 40 particulares, quedando los demas edifiçios sentidos, y desenquadradas las paredes, mudose un monte de un lado a otro”.⁶⁸ To emphasise the gravity and impact of the disaster to the king's councillors, the viceroy enclosed with his missive the report of a Valencian notary, Juan Bautista García, who happened to be in Adamuz when the tremors destroyed most of the town centre. This text described the adventurous deliverance of the writer who, with some good luck and a fair dose of determination, had succeeded in escaping from the house where he was a guest: “entendió se le caya encima y huyendo de alli fue a la puerta de otro aposento adonde diviso una ventana [...] se arrojó y cayó de pechos sobre el texado”.⁶⁹

However, in the vast majority of cases, the survivors of the earthquakes avowed that their salvation had been made possible only through celestial intervention. A few days after the earthquake of 1688, Viceroy Santisteban ordered a first count of the victims and the damage suffered both in Naples and in other parts of the kingdom. The secretaries of the viceregal court drew up a detailed report in Castilian to be sent to the court of Madrid so that the members of the Council of Italy could draw on a broad overview in order to make the decisions most appropriate to the dramatic situation. In addition to recording the destruction of buildings and the number of deaths, the report also included a story

67. Elaine Fulton, “Acts of God: The Confessionalization of Disaster in Reformation Europe”, in *Historical Disasters in Context: Science, Religion, and Politics*, ed. by Andrea Janku, Gerrit J. Schenk and Franz Mauelshagen, New York, Routledge, 2012, pp. 54-74.

68. ACA, *Consejo de Aragón*, leg. 646, no. 35/1. Duke of Montalto to the Council of Aragon, Valencia (26 June 1656).

69. *Ibid.*, no. 35/5. Report of Juan Bautista García, Valencia (20 June 1656).

that, in those tragic days, had moved the entire population of mourning Naples.⁷⁰ Shortly before the earthquake, the friar Agostino Rudimado was kneeling in prayer before the famous relic of St Cajetan in the basilica of San Paolo Maggiore, built on the site of the ancient temple of Castor and Pollux, one of the buildings worst hit by the tremors. As soon as he felt the earth begin to move, the monk ran rapidly towards the portico, where, however, he was immediately buried by the falling columns. A couple of hours later, the rescuers pulled Agostino alive out of a pile of bodies and rubble. As soon as he came round, the friar began to ask insistently about the fate of another monk, whom he had seen holding up the facade with a single hand. The interpretation most widespread among the Neapolitans was that the other monk was actually “el glorioso San Caetano, que tantos y tan admirables prodigios a obrado en esta ciudad, pues la tiene devajo de su protección”.⁷¹

In the same report, the authors referred to what is perhaps the most famous miraculous episode of the early modern period linked to an earthquake. The story is well known because the person involved was none other than Vincenzo Maria Orsini, Archbishop of Benevento and future Pope Benedict XIII, who was buried alive when the archbishop's palace collapsed and not rescued until over an hour later. Dated 22 June, Orsini's written evidence was then printed by the Neapolitan publisher Novello de Bonis, transforming St Filippo Neri into the ultimate go-to protector against earthquakes.⁷² The archbishop's letter, translated into Castilian, was transcribed in the report so that the members of the Council of Italy should know about the miraculous manner in which the eminent prelate had been saved. According to Orsini, the floors of the archbishop's place caved in with extraordinary rapidity, so that he found himself submerged by rubble in a room where, in the previous weeks, he had placed in a cupboard some images of his patron, St Filippo Neri, which “se exparcieron alrededor de mi y de vajo de mi caveza” in what was almost a military-style defensive formation. Among the favours granted by St Filippo Neri, Orsini emphasised the fact that the

70. Pasquale Palmieri, “I miracoli fra scienza e storia. Il sangue di san Gennaro, la Sindone e altre reliquie”, *Storica*, 23/67-68 (2017), pp. 193-219.

71. AGS, *Secretarías Provinciales*, leg. 56, s.f. *Relación de los daños que ha ocasionado en la Ciudad y Reyno de Napoles el terremoto el dia 5 de Junio de 1688*.

72. Monica Azzolini, “Coping with Catastrophe: St Filippo Neri as Patron Saint of Earthquakes”, *Quaderni storici*, 3 (2017), pp. 727-750.

most important documentation of the archbishopric had remained intact. To smooth the path of the Benevento authorities in restoring the correct functioning of the administration in the post-disaster period, the “sancto a conservado todas las escripturas que en algun modo pertenecian a la razon y gobierno”.⁷³

Over the course of the early modern period, some of the earthquake reports enjoyed an unprecedented circulation by the passage through the printing press. As mentioned, earthquakes were the subject of a literary genre that continued to garner ever-greater market shares over the course of the decades. The interest of the public was fuelled by a production of texts made possible only by the spread of printing, although manuscripts continued to play a fundamental role in the transmission of concepts and ideas.⁷⁴ With titles accompanied by attributes such as *vere* and *pietose*, many accounts of earthquakes became literal bestsellers. In the 17th century in particular, the change in scientific approaches and the consolidation of the Baroque vision gave a different status to this type of printed product, generally made up of just a few pages.⁷⁵

Sometimes the administration of the Hispanic Monarchy closest to the epicentre even transmitted such accounts to the court of Madrid. In the summer of 1627, a prolonged earthquake swarm caused destruction and panic in the province of Capitanata, in the Kingdom of Naples. For months, the inhabitants of the various cities were constrained to camp out in the surrounding fields, since almost all the houses and buildings in the area had collapsed or were uninhabitable. The Capitanata earthquake was the subject of many printed publications that were then sold in the most important squares all over Italian peninsula and Europe. The *Vera relatione del pietoso caso*, published in Naples by Giovanni Orlandi, was a representative example of this literary genre, and the title assured the reader that the text was based on “relationi, come si giudica, autentiche, e vere”.⁷⁶ The astute choice of the adjectives in the title responded primarily

73. AGS, *Secretarías Provinciales*, leg. 56, s.f. *Relación de los daños*.

74. Mario Infelise, *Prima dei giornali. Alle origini della pubblica informazione*, Rome, Laterza, 2002.

75. Brendan Dooley, “News and Doubt in Early Modern Culture: Or, Are We Having a Public Sphere Yet?”, in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Alcorn Baron, London-New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 275-290.

76. *Vera relatione del pietoso caso successo nelle terre contenute della Provincia di Puglia, Regno di Napoli, cioè del terremoto sentito in questo presente anno 1627. Cavata*

to a commercial strategy: the alleged testimony from the epicentre undoubtedly made the text more appetising to the public of the time.⁷⁷ It is, however, extremely likely that contemporary readers considered the information contained in such works to be true. The viceregal secretariat of Naples, for instance, translated Orlandi's publication into Castilian, which circulated in manuscript form under the title *Verdadera Relaçion* in the official circuits of the Habsburg administration, where in theory only reliable information was transmitted.⁷⁸ In both the original and the Spanish translation, the account recorded the miraculous appearance of Our Lady in the sky above Lucera – one of the places worst struck by the quake – mitigating divine anger: “stava una nube bianca, e grande, dentro della quale era una donna vestita di bianco [...] che sia vero, ò no non sta à me affermarlo”. However, during the tremors, a local hermit who was prostrate before an image of the Virgin Mary heard “più volte una voce, che diceva figlio agiuto”.⁷⁹

In any case, the intervention of a saint or of Our Lady could save not only a worthy person such as Cardinal Orsini in 1688, but also a community. In 1694, the Palazzo della Vicaria in Naples, which was the most important law court in the kingdom, suffered severe structural damage, and the powerful tremors caused several parts of the building to collapse.⁸⁰ The Vicaria, which was located at Castel Capuano, managed one of the most crowded prisons in the city, but not a single inmate was killed because, according to a petition sent to Viceroy Santisteban, the inmates had been protected by the Madonna del Carmine (Our Lady of Mount Carmel).⁸¹

da relationi, come si giudica, autentiche, e vere, pubblicata per Gio. Orlandi Stampatore alla Pietà, Naples, nella Stampa di Egidio Longo, 1627.

77. Domenico Cecere, Chiara De Caprio, “Stratégies de communication et plans de reconstruction après le tremblement de terre de 1783 de Calabre”, in *Une histoire du sensible: la perception des victimes de catastrophe du XII^e au XVIII^e siècle*, ed. by Thomas Labbé and Gerrit Jasper Schenk, Turnhout, Brepols, 2018, pp. 221-241.

78. AHN, *Universidades*, Libro 1156, ff. 208r-211v. *Verdadera Relaçion del lastimoso caso successo en la Proviñcia de la Pulla en el Reyno de Napoles del terremoto que se ha oydo en este presente año de 1627.*

79. *Vera relatione del pietoso caso.*

80. Carla Pedicino, “El Sacro Regio Consejo Napolitano entre historiografía y fuentes (Siglos XV-XVI)”, *Cultura Latinoamericana*, 30/2 (2019), pp. 240-267.

81. ASN, *Segreterie dei Viceré, Scritture diverse*, vol. 908, s.f. Petition of the inmates of the Vicaria, Naples (18 September 1694). On Our Lady of Mount Carmel in early modern Naples, see: Peter Burke, “The Virgin of the Carmine and the Revolt of Masaniello”, *Past & Present*, 99/1 (1983), pp. 3-21.

In addition to the numerous victims and the practically total destruction of the region caused by the Lima earthquake of 1687, the disaster also exacerbated the tension between the viceroy, Duke of Palata, and the archbishop of the city, Melchor Liñán y Cisneros. In the years immediately following, the political controversy became the hot topic in the correspondence sent from Peru to Madrid. In the first reconstruction of the earthquake, the Duke of Palata already sowed the seed of doubt about the capacities of the eminent prelate, who had been unable to assist in the aid operations on account of his well-known health problems, “en la ocasión que mas les havia menester”.⁸² Months later, in one of the letters most critical of the archbishop’s conduct, the viceroy confirmed to Charles II that the situation in the capital was still desolate and that the survivors lived with a strong sense of guilt, almost every one of them swearing that he had been saved because his own “Angel de su guarda le sacó como de la mano para librarle de la sepultura que le estavan formando las paredes de sus casas”.⁸³

Finally, a last case that took place on the Mediterranean frontier, the testing ground of early modern Europe:⁸⁴ a year after the defeat by the Ottoman fleet in the naval battle off the shores of Preveza in 1538, the court of Charles V received disturbing news about an earthquake that had destroyed the fortress of Bona, now Annaba, on the Maghreb coast. The port had been occupied by the imperial forces following the famous conquest of Tunis, and the government of the city was entrusted to the captain, Alvar Gómez, known as Zagal. The life of this military commander reads like the screenplay of an adventure film, and he eventually died in Africa of wounds he himself had inflicted in a desperate attempt at suicide following accusations of corruption and authoritarianism.⁸⁵

Within the space of a few years, the stronghold of Bona had, in effect, been abandoned to its fate, given that its strategic importance in the war against the Ottoman Empire was effectively zero, incomparable to that

82. AGI, *Lima*, 87, no. 27. Duke of Palata to Charles II, Lima (8 December 1687).

83. *Ibid.*, Duke of Palata to Charles II, Lima (20 May 1688).

84. Emilio Sola Castaño, *Los que van y vienen. Informaciones y fronteras en el Mediterráneo clásico del siglo XVI*, Alcalá de Henares, Universidad de Alcalá-Servicio de Publicaciones, 2005.

85. Simone Lombardo, “Un romanzo della frontiera mediterranea. Il caso di Bona e di Alvar Gómez (1535-1540)”, *Tiempos Modernos. Revista electrónica de Historia Moderna*, 39/2 (2019), pp. 1-27.

of La Goulette or Oran. The string of garrisons along the frontier with Islam had to address a dire situation of constant hardships: the wages and victuals always arrived late, and the relations with the local people were generally hostile. In a context that was already harsh in itself, the situation of Bona became unbearable when the walls of the fortress were destroyed by an earthquake.⁸⁶ The quake hit the Maghreb seaport with violence on 15 February 1539. Four days later, Zagal wrote a first letter to Don Francisco de los Cobos, the influential secretary of the emperor, informing him of the damage caused by the earthquake: “la torre del homenaje todo por el suelo hasta los cimientos”.⁸⁷ The news was communicated personally to the court by Zagal’s right-hand man, Bautista Constantino. The herald confirmed the grievous damage to the walls produced by the tremors, which, moreover, had caused over 100 deaths. The messenger’s report also made a first mention of the miraculous deliverance of the captain, who “escapo milagrosamente de manera que todo se perdio excepto dos tigres”.⁸⁸

The increasingly insistent criticisms of Zagal’s behaviour drove the emperor to order the magistrate Miguel Vaquer to make an official visit to the Bona garrison.⁸⁹ As a result, the news of the earthquake was extensively documented, despite the episode having taken place in the early decades of the 16th century, a period for which the traces of natural disasters are extremely scarce, at least in the central archives of the Hispanic Monarchy.⁹⁰ According to the version that was accepted even by the emperor, Don Alvar had escaped death by a miracle, considering that his residence had almost entirely collapsed. In a letter to Charles V dated 28 February, Zagal reconstructed the episode in detail: God had spared his life because in the previous months the captain had directed his efforts at the conversion –

86. Gennaro Varriale, “Se li mandassimo in Africa? Un progetto di colonizzazione per i greco-albanesi di Napoli (XVI secolo)”, in *La terra ai forestieri*, ed. by Giampaolo Salice, Pisa, Pacini Editore, 2019, pp. 81-100.

87. AGS, *Estado*, leg. 464, s.f. Alvar Gómez to Francisco de los Cobos, Bona (19 February 1538).

88. *Ibid.*, leg. 467, f. 75. Summary of the dispatches sent by Alvar Gómez (from 28 February to 14 April 1538).

89. *Ibid.*, leg. 1114, f. 81 Miguel de Vaquer to Charles V, Palermo (22 December 1540).

90. Gaia Bruno, “Fronteggiare l’emergenza: le reazioni delle istituzioni del Regno di Napoli di fronte ai sismi del XVII secolo”, *Mediterranea. Ricerche Storiche*, 51 (2021), pp. 115-146.

rather ambiguous, from our standpoint – of thirteen Muslim women who lived in his residence. Alvar Gómez compared the girls, who were very probably slaves, to angels who – thanks to divine clemency – escaped with him through the rubble “syn rescibir ningun daño de nuestras personas que todo lo demas que avia en mi casa se perdio y murio”.⁹¹

5. Conclusion

Over the course of the early modern period, in the Habsburg administration, rivers of ink were consumed in addressing the correlation between the devastation caused by earthquakes and the wrath of God. Despite historiographical interpretations built based on the black legend and 19th-century nationalism, the Hispanic Monarchy was not *sic et simpliciter* the homeland of archaism, but the planetary configuration of the seismic risk of its domains made this an essential benchmark in the coeval interpretation of telluric activity. Not incidentally, some of the most authoritative and widespread works on earthquakes were published in the Habsburg cities. As mentioned, the episteme of the time was constructed on heterogeneous bases, including Greco-Roman tradition, biblical exegesis, the principles of astrology and the pragmatism characteristic of the *conquistadores*, which were rendered incompatible only with the Enlightenment review of reality in the second half of the 18th century.⁹²

On 23 December 1586, Santiago de Guatemala suffered another earthquake that razed to the ground over eighty houses and killed dozens of people. The political situation in the Caribbean region was uncertain after the capture of the island of Santo Domingo by Francis Drake. The concerned city *cabildo* averted Philip II of the real risk of an English incursion into his territory, which was now defenceless following the destruction of the defensive infrastructures in the earthquake. Regarding the disaster itself, the information coming from Guatemala as a dominion accustomed to such tremors gravitated essentially around two points: the plea for tax exemptions and the divine origin of the catastrophe, “fue Nuestro Señor

91. AGS, *Estado*, leg. 464, s.f. Alvar Gómez to Charles V, Bona (28 February 1538).

92. On the concept of episteme, see: Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1966.

servido de se acordar de nosotros”.⁹³ To demonstrate to the Almighty the sincerity of their contrition, the Catholics hoped for the intercession of Our Lady or of a saint to act as mediator between the divine plan and earthly remorse, since the mortal origins of both the Virgin and saints then made more sense of human failings. To supplicate God’s mercy, the local institutions of the Hispanic Monarchy, together with the ecclesiastical authorities, organised processions in which relics and sacred images were carried. In the collective mindset of the time, imploration of Our Lady or of a saint was an essential part of the solution to the problem.⁹⁴ In areas of constant telluric activity, such as the Philippines, some earthquakes were even named after the saint of the day. The earthquake of St Andrew in 1645 was one of the most devastating that the archipelago suffered in the early modern period. The Cathedral of Manila, the other churches and most of the buildings suffered incalculable damage, and the victims numbered hundreds. Almost a year later, the Franciscans in the Philippines informed Philip IV that “el día de San Andres temblo la tierra en estas yslas con tanto vigor que se vinieron al suelo casi todos los edificios de la ciudad”.⁹⁵

Given the moral and religious implications, earthquakes were one of the worst nightmares for the community, especially in places of intense seismic activity. There was also another characteristic of the tremors that accentuated the fears of contemporaries: the unpredictability. After the most destructive earthquakes, the communities that had been struck passed the memory down to younger generations so that the tragic event became a key episode in the history of the territory. In the months following the Lima earthquake of 1687, the viceroy ordered the notary Diego Fernández Montano, lieutenant of the *cabildo*, to gather together all the testimonies and information about the damage suffered by the city so that it should never be forgotten “para los venideros siglos”.⁹⁶ In areas such as Peru that

93. AGI, *Guatemala*, 41, no. 70. Cabildo of Santiago de Guatemala to Philip II (6 May 1587).

94. Pasquale Palmieri, “Protecting the Faithful City: Disasters and the Cult of the Saints (Naples, 1573-1587)”, in *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture*, ed. by Domenico Cecere, Chiara De Caprio, Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Pasquale Palmieri, Rome, Viella, 2018, pp. 207-220.

95. AGI, *Filipinas*, 81, no. 10. Definitors of the Franciscans to Philip IV, Manila (4 August 1646).

96. AGI, *Lima*, 87, no. 42. Report of Diego Fernández Montano, Lima (5 August 1688).

were accustomed to the quakes, over time the people actually acquired the ability to assess the impact of the telluric activity. In the months prior to the earthquake of 1687, the Archbishop of Lima sent a letter to the Duke of Palata that, to us at least, would appear to have something of the prophetic. The archbishop described the divine anger that had been unleashed against Peru on account of the viceroy's interference in the local church: the entire region seemed to be hostage to pirate raids and a smallpox epidemic. Finally, Don Melchor Liñán y Cisneros stressed the exceptional and powerful earthquake swarm that had, since the spring, been torturing the territory of Peru with "temblores, que aunque tan comunes en este Reyno, [...] han sido de los ynsolitos, por aver descargado alli Dios la espada de su justicia con muerte de mas de mil personas".⁹⁷

Sometimes a past disaster was recalled in the administrative documentation as a precedent to bolster the claims of the present, such as requests for tax breaks. The impact of the earthquakes on the collective imagination fostered the favourable outcome of the requests submitted to the court. Contemporaries were aware of this, to the point that some of the reports of earthquakes submitted were indeed what would now be called "fake news", excogitated to obtain an advantage. On 13 April 1595, King Philip II accepted the petition made by Alcoy: for the next ten years, the municipality could collect all the proceeds from the mills. As a result of the sovereign's concession, the city was able to erect a new monastery on the site where a tabernacle of the Holy Sepulchre already stood. According to the petitioners, popular devotion to the tabernacle had begun after an act of sacrilege had caused a couple of very strong quakes.⁹⁸ According to the document transmitted to the Council of Aragon, in January 1571 – that is, over twenty years earlier – a Frenchman named Juan Prats stole the hosts and the sacred objects from the church while it was empty, whereupon suddenly "se oyó un espantoso terremoto". Despite God's first warning, the foreigner made off with the booty undeterred, while "se oyó otro terremoto saliendo de la iglesia". Three days later, the desecrator was tracked down by one of the citizens, who, inspired by the Almighty, found the gold and silver objects in the Frenchman's stables. Having been smoked out, Juan Prats was duly executed in the public square, but in his house "se fundò una

97. AGI, *Lima*, 86, s.f. Melchor de Liñán y Cisneros to the Duke of Palata, Lima (10 May 1687).

98. Santonja Cardona, *Iglesia y sociedad*, p. 461.

capilla so invocacion del Santo Sepulchro”, which became the foundation of the future monastery.⁹⁹

The story presented to His Majesty by the inhabitants of Alcoy was the antithesis of the evidence of dozens of survivors referring the intervention of Our Lady or a saint in favour of the victims. Juan Prats, on the contrary, had all the traits of the antihero: sacrilege, and a foreigner to boot. However extravagant it may seem to us, the anecdote of the fake quakes nevertheless hit the target. Philip II supported the construction of a monastery around the miraculous chapel, which was erected, moreover, in a territory where seismic activity was sadly recurrent.

99. ACA, *Consejo de Aragón*, leg. 697, no. 69. *Sobre la merced: porque supplica la villa de Alcoy*, Madrid (13 April 1595).

FLAVIA TUDINI

Narrating the 1687 Lima Earthquake: Institutions and Devotions in the Face of Catastrophe*

1. 20 October 1687: the earthquake

At four o'clock on the morning of 20 October 1687, the city of Lima was awoken by a prolonged earthquake tremor. Although the city was accustomed to feeling the earth move, the inhabitants immediately realised the terrifying and destructive nature of the event in terms both of length – “tres credos”¹ – and intensity.² The people rushed from their homes, which were collapsing around them under the violence of the tremors. The

* The abbreviations used are the following: AAV: Archivo Apostolico Vaticano (Vatican City); AGI: Archivo General de Indias (Seville); AHNob: Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza (Toledo); ARSI: Archivium Romanum Societatis Iesu (Rome); BNE: Biblioteca Nacional de España (Madrid). I should like to thank Domenico Cecere for having allowed me to read a preview of his article, “Dall’informazione alla gestione dell’emergenza. Una proposta per lo studio dei disastri in età moderna”, *Storica*, 77 (2020), pp. 9-40.

1. Anonymous [Joseph Buendía], *Relación del exemplar castigo que envió Dios a la ciudad de Lima, cabeça del Perú, y a su Costa de Barlovento, con los espantosos temblores del día 20 de octubre del año de 1687, con licencia de Lima y por su original en México, por la viuda de Francisco Rodríguez Lupercio, 1688*, in BNE, VE/1461/1; and the *Relación del terremoto de 1687*, in *Terremotos. Colección de las relaciones de los mas notables que ha sufrido esta capital y que la han arruinado; va precedida del plano de lo que fue el puerto del Callao*, ed. by Manuel Odriozola, Lima, Tipografía de Aurelio Alfaro, 1863, pp. 33 ff.

2. Chiara De Caprio has noted that, in the manuscript or printed accounts of disasters of natural origin, and earthquakes in particular, it was customary to describe duration by reference to the most commonly recited prayers, whereas the intensity of the phenomenon was measured by its capacity to destroy the public or religious buildings that defined the image of the urban space. See Chiara De Caprio, “Narrating Disasters: Writers and Texts Between Historical Experience and Narrative Discourse”, in *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture*, ed. by Domenico Cecere, Chiara De Caprio, Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Pasquale Palmieri, Rome, Viella, 2018, pp. 19-40: 32.

religious sought refuge in the cloisters or in the open spaces adjacent to their convents, and the viceroy was forced to take shelter with his family in the *Plaza Mayor*. Terrified by what appeared to be the scene of the Last Judgement, the people confessed their sins and invoked the mercy of God in the hope of abating his anger.³ The first quake was followed by a second and, when the earth finally stopped moving, a scene of death and destruction appeared before the eyes of the inhabitants of Lima. Relief for the population was immediate; the viceroy himself was the first to arrange help for those in difficulty, and the religious also offered their material and spiritual support.⁴ However, at 6 o'clock in the morning, the city was struck by another earthquake, even stronger than the earlier one, which destroyed even those buildings that had not previously been damaged.⁵ The appearance of Lima was changed beyond recognition: almost all the finest and most elegant palaces, the churches and convents had been severely damaged and were uninhabitable.⁶ Numerous walls had collapsed onto the streets, and the air was filled with the cries of those who were still alive, buried beneath the rubble of their homes. Wherever voices could not be heard, there was death. Then, after the earthquake, the sea in front of the nearby port of Callao withdrew by about half a league and rushed back again, striking the harbour walls with devastating force, destroying them and crashing straight into the houses, killing hundreds of people and wounding countless others.⁷ The Archbishop of Lima, Melchor Liñán y Cisneros, was also in the town of Callao at the time. He was wounded during the first quake when the ceiling of the

3. Anonymous [Father Álvarez de Toledo], *Terremoto en Lima*, in Lizardo Seiner Lizárraga, *Historia de los sismos en el Perú: Catálogo. Siglos XV-XVII*, Lima, Universidad de Lima, Fondo Editorial, 2011, p. 371.

4. *Relación del exemplar castigo*, in BNE, VE/1461/1; *Copia de carta del Duque de la Palata para Su Magestad*, Lima, 8 December 1687, in BNE, Ms. 9375, ff. 142-145.

5. *Relación del temblor que arruinó Lima el 20 de octubre de 1687*, in *Terremotos*, p. 28.

6. *Relación del exemplar castigo*, in BNE, VE/1461/1. See also *Terremotos*, pp. 26-27; Judith Mansilla, "La población de Lima y la administración colonial frente al impacto del terremoto de 1687", *Summa Humanitatis*, 8/1 (2015), pp. 52-73: 56-57. The *Relación del terremoto del 1687* analyses in detail the destruction of the parish churches and the other ecclesiastical buildings, in *Terremotos*, p. 34.

7. Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaina, "Las catástrofes naturales como instrumento de observación social: el caso del terremoto de Lima en 1746", *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 62/2 (2005), pp. 47-76: 48; Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Historia General del Perú*, 12 vols, vol. III, Lima, Carlos Milla Batres, 1966, pp. 381-382; *Terremotos*, pp. 27-31.

house where he was staying collapsed, but he was luckily saved from the subsequent tsunami, partly thanks to the help of his *majordomo*, Don Francisco Jáuregui.⁸

The earthquake did not affect only the city of Lima and the surrounding area; the tremors were felt along the entire coast of the Viceroyalty of Peru, from Trujillo to Arica, and numerous public and religious buildings suffered severe damage.⁹ Despite the intensity and destructive force of the quakes, the mortality recorded by the authorities in the affected areas was limited. This was largely due to the fact that at the time of the third tremor – the strongest and most destructive – the people had already abandoned their homes to take refuge in open places at a distance from the most severely damaged buildings. As a result, the greatest number of victims was caused by the tsunami that struck Callao, which caused several hundred deaths.¹⁰

After the violent tremors of 20 October, others were recorded in the weeks and months that followed: small quakes that continued at least up to 2 December. Seiner Lizárraga has recently observed that the seismic event of 20 October was merely the last of numerous earthquakes that struck the coast of the Viceroyalty of Peru, and its capital in particular, throughout almost the entire year of 1687. The first quake was felt on 31 March 1687 during the Easter season, and the tremors continued up to 13 April of the following year. After the earthquake of 20 October, Seiner Lizárraga also recorded the tremors of 21 October and 10 November, which were felt principally in the city of Arequipa, and another earthquake of considerable force that was felt in Lima and the surrounding areas in the month of January 1688.¹¹

For those who managed to survive, the ruined city and the death toll were tangible signs of divine wrath stemming from the sins of its inhabitants; it was a punishment for their licentious and dissolute behaviour and for the laxity of religious observance among the secular and regular clergy.¹²

8. *Terremotos*, pp. 30-31.

9. Seiner Lizárraga, *Historia de los sismos*, p. 344.

10. *Terremotos*, p. 29; *Copia de carta del Duque de la Palata*, ff. 142-143.

11. Vargas Ugarte, *Historia General del Perú*, vol. III, p. 381; Seiner Lizárraga, *Historia de los sismos*, pp. 344, 393.

12. Virginia García Acosta, “Divinidad y desastres. Interpretaciones, manifestaciones y respuestas”, *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 35 (2017), pp. 46-82; Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, “La destrucción de Nínive: temblores,

2. *Earthquake protector saints and the Cristo de los Milagros*

Disasters of natural origin, and earthquakes in particular, were an important element in the cultural and religious imaginary of the population of Europe and America in the early modern period, creating a species of latent collective apprehension. As Bernard Lavallé has observed:

los terremotos constituyeron sin duda un de las formas americanas más visibles de esa larga secuencia de angustia por la que atravesó el mundo occidental durante tres centurias a partir de mediados del siglo XIV. En el gran fenómeno de culpabilización de las masas que entonces se desarrolló, los sismos desempeñaron un papel semejante al que empezó a deslindarse en tiempo de la Peste Negra.¹³

The collective anxiety made it possible to yoke these unpredictable phenomena of destructive consequences to the conviction that they were caused by a satanic manipulation, or were sent as a warning and a just divine castigation.¹⁴ Consequently, in the accounts and reports of contemporaries, earthquakes were presented as a punishment from God, adopting a medieval schema that interpreted calamitous events from a moral perspective.¹⁵ As a result, the human response to earthquakes could not be other than a devout resignation to divine will. It was pointless to seek a refuge for the body if one did not seek the salvation of one's soul, giving oneself up to God's will. Indeed, the true punishment was suffered not by the victims of the disaster but by those who remained alive and who bore witness to the grief, destruction and the unburied dead.

While, on the one hand, the catastrophe occurred as a result of the sins and immorality of humankind, on the other, God's mercy was displayed through a series of signs and miraculous events that warned believers

políticas de santidad y la Compañía de Jesús (1687-1692)", *Boletín Americanista*, 58 (2008), pp. 149-169: 153.

13. Bernard Lavallé, "Miedos terrenales, angustias escatológicas y pánicos en tiempos de terremotos y el Perú a comienzos del siglo XVII", in *Una historia de los usos del miedo*, ed. by Pilar Gozalbo Aizpuru, Anne Staples and Valentina Torres Septién, Ciudad de México, Universidad Iberoamericana, 2009, pp. 103-128: 125.

14. Fernando Iwasaki, *¡Aplaca, Señor; tu ira! Lo maravilloso y lo imaginario en Lima colonial*, Madrid, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2018, pp. 91-93; Seiner Lizárraga, *Historia de los sismos*, pp. 28-30.

15. Domenico Cecere, "Disastri naturali e informazione negli imperi d'età moderna. Introduzione", *Studi Storici*, 4 (2019), pp. 773-780: 775.

about the imminent punishment. However, men were not always able to understand the divine signs on earth, which could only be interpreted with hindsight.¹⁶

The link between disasters of natural origin, divine anger and popular religiosity was particularly strong in Peru, which was struck by numerous earthquakes throughout the 17th century. At the time of the Arequipa earthquake in 1604, brother Francisco Solano, in his *Sermón de la destrucción de Lima*, interpreted the calamity as a warning of the imminent destruction of Lima if it did not return to a moral way of life and if its inhabitants did not sincerely repent.¹⁷

In the popular and religious imaginary of the Baroque period, earthquakes and other events could also be interpreted within the more general constant quest for the divine presence in human life, which manifested itself in messages that were not easily intelligible.¹⁸ Natural events, and disasters in particular, could therefore be set in relation to the religious life of the communities and the emergence of local cults. In the context of 17th-century Spanish America, it was possible to observe how the disasters were linked to the advance and success of the struggle against idolatries, to the deaths in the odour of sanctity of figures considered venerable and, from the second half of the century, to the positive outcomes of the beatification processes of the first American saints.¹⁹

Considering this rich interpretative background, we can therefore understand the reaction of the inhabitants of Lima on 20 October 1687 when they were surprised by the three violent earthquake tremors. Divine punishment had once again been wreaked on the city because of its immorality, corruption, excesses and the decline of religious fervour.²⁰

16. Iwasaki, *¡Aplaca, Señor, tu ira!*, pp. 98-99, 101.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-97.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 195; Celia Langdeau Cussen, "The Search for Idols and Saints in Colonial Peru: Linking Extirpation and Beatification", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 85/3 (2005), pp. 417-448.

20. On the economic and moral decadence of Lima in the 17th century, see *Mérito, venalidad y corrupción en España y América, siglos XVII y XVIII*, ed. by Francisco Andújar Castillo and Pilar Ponce Leiva, Valencia, Albatros, 2016; Margarita Suárez, "Política imperial, presión fiscal y crisis política en el virreinato del Perú durante el gobierno del virrey conde de Castellar, 1674-1678", *Histórica*, 39/2 (2015), pp. 51-87; Alejandra B. Osorio, *Inventing Lima: Baroque Modernity in Peru's South Sea Metropolis*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008; Maria Emma Mannarelli, *Pecados Públicos: La Ilegalidad en*

Religious consciousness was reawakened by the very first quake, and the people fled into the streets, confessing their sins as they went; the leading preachers of the religious orders present in the city left their convents, exhorting the faithful to abandon their licentious ways and inviting them to entrust themselves to God. In the streets and squares, the priests gave sermons and pronounced *actos de penitencia*, attacking the immorality of the city, the lack of religious observance among the priests, and the corruption of the *curas doctrineros*.²¹ Despite being wounded, even Archbishop Liñán y Cisneros took part in this wave of devotion, encouraging repentance through the proclamation of a jubilee to supplicate divine mercy. However, human actions would prove vain if the people, and the religious themselves, did not truly repent their sins, entrusting themselves without reservation to God, the Virgin and the saints.²²

Since the end of the 16th century, there have emerged particular cults and devotions to saints, or to specific connotations of the Virgin and Christ, who have been elected patrons of various territories, and intercession has been sought from them for protection against disasters.²³ In the middle of the 16th century, the city of Arequipa already boasted two patrons: St Martha to protect against earthquakes, and St Sebastian against epidemics and volcanic eruptions. In the city of Cuzco, invocations against earthquakes were addressed to the *Cristo* or *Señor de los Temblores* (the Lord of the Earthquakes), who was believed by the devout to have stopped the disastrous earthquake of March 1650 after being carried in procession. The city of Lima boasted numerous patrons against earthquakes, who were chosen following miracles protecting the people that took place during the seismic tremors. St Isabel was proclaimed patron of the city in the wake of a violent earthquake in July 1586, whereas after the earthquake of 1630 the protection of the *Virgen del Milagro* (the Virgin of the Miracle) was invoked.²⁴ Consequently,

Lima, Siglo XVII, Lima, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, 1993; Kenneth Andrien, "Corruption, Inefficiency, and Imperial Decline in the Seventeenth-Century Viceroyalty of Peru", *The Americas*, 41/1 (1984), pp. 1-20.

21. *Relación del exemplar castigo*, in BNE, VE/1461/1; Coello de la Rosa, "La destrucción de Nínive", p. 153.

22. Coello de la Rosa, "La destrucción de Nínive", p. 154.

23. See also Rogelio Altez, "Historias de milagros y temblores: fe y eficacia simbólica en Hispanoamérica, siglos XVI-XVIII", *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 35 (2017), pp. 178-213.

24. Seiner Lizárraga, *Historia de los sismos*, p. 27; Coello de la Rosa, "La destrucción de Nínive", pp. 154-155; Cussen, "The Search for Idols and Saints"; Celia Langdeau

in October 1687 the population entrusted itself to the protection of its traditional patrons and to *Cristo de los Temblores*, supplemented with new devotions stimulated by miracles and prodigious events that had recently occurred, which were subsequently interpreted as warnings of the imminent disaster that had gone unheeded.²⁵

On 2 July 1687 in the convent of the Nazarenas Carmelitas Descalzas nuns in Lima, a statue of the Virgin Mary miraculously began to shed tears. The news spread rapidly throughout the city and a miracle was invoked in various quarters. However, it was not recognised by the archbishop or the religious authorities of the city until the earthquake took place on 20 October, when the event was reinterpreted and defined as a divine warning.²⁶ During the quakes, the statue was moved to a temporary chapel in the *Plaza Mayor* so the faithful could gather there.²⁷ It was only after the earthquake that the miracle was finally recognised and the *cabildo municipal* decided to celebrate the holy image every year on the anniversary of the earthquake.²⁸ The so-called *Virgen de las Lagrimas* (the Virgin of Tears) was thus elected as the protector against earthquakes and was carried in procession also at the time of the 1746 earthquake.²⁹

But the tears of the Virgin were not the only aspect to predict what was to be a catastrophe for the city of Lima. Even before the miracle of

Cussen, “El Barroco por dentro y por fuera: redes de devoción en Lima colonial”, *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*, 26 (1999), pp. 215-225.

25. *Terremotos*, p. 26. On the devotion to the *Cristo de los Milagros* during the catastrophic earthquake of 1746, see Charles F. Walker, “Great Balls of Fire: Premonitions and the Destruction of Lima, 1746”, in *Aftershocks: Earthquakes and Cultural Politics in Latin America*, ed. by Jürgen Buchenau and Lyman L. Johnson, Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2009, pp. 21-51: 43-78. On the earthquake of 1746, see Susy M. Sánchez Rodríguez, “Del gran temblor a la monstruosa conspiración. Dinámica y repercusiones del miedo limeño en el terremoto de 1746”, in *El miedo en el Perú, siglos XVI al XX*, ed. by Claudia Rosas Lauro, Lima, PUCP, 2005, pp. 103-121; Pérez-Mallaína, “Las catástrofes naturales”; Walker, “Great Balls of Fire”.

26. “Todos reconocieron en las lagrimas y sudor de esta sancta imagen la clemencia y congoja con que venció a su Hijo Santísimo para que no acabase con esta ciudad”, *Introducción al virrey Melchor de Navarra y Rocaful*, in Lewis Hanke, *Los virreyes españoles en América durante el gobierno de la Casa de Austria Perú*, 7 vols, Madrid, Atlas, 1978-1980, vol. VI, p. 11.

27. *Terremotos*, p. 32.

28. *Relación de don Merlchor de Navarra y Rocaful [...] virrey del Peru al duque de la Monclova su sucesor [...] 18 XII 1689*, in Hanke, *Los virreyes españoles*, vol. VI, p. 114.

29. Seiner Lizárraga, *Historia de los sismos*, p. 27.

1687, another prodigious event had caused a wave of popular devotion towards a crude image of the Crucifixion painted on the wall of a chapel on the outskirts of the city. As noted by Fernando Iwasaki in a recent study on American 17th-century religious imagery, the devotion to the *Cristo de Pachacamilla*, which then became widely known as the *Cristo de los Milagros*, spread within a context of fervent religiosity, further stimulated by several miraculous and sensational events that took place around the same time.

This devotion originated in the second half of the 17th century within a confraternity of Black freedmen and slaves originating from Angola,³⁰ one of whom painted an image of the crucified Christ on the wall of a small chapel in the *barrio* (neighbourhood) of Pachacamilla.³¹ The *barrio* was part of the parish of San Marcello, but nothing more is known about the name of the chapel or the saint to whom the confraternity was dedicated.³² A document conserved in the archive of the Nazarenas convent records that the image of the Crucifixion had already been painted in 1651 as an act of devotion.³³ Just a few years later, the premises were abandoned, but, despite this, the wall on which the Crucifixion was painted withstood the violent tremors of 1655 that destroyed several of the adjacent buildings.³⁴ The inhabitants of Lima considered the extraordinary preservation of the image to be a miracle, but there was no form of institutionalisation or recognition of the devotion.

30. On the presence of Black slaves in Peru and their devotional practices, see Frederick P. Bowser, *The African Slave in Colonial Peru 1524-1650*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1974; Marie-Cécilie Bénassy, "I metodi di evangelizzazione degli schiavi neri nell'America spagnola, in particolare dei bozales", in *L'Europa e l'evangelizzazione del Nuovo Mondo*, ed. by Luciano Vaccaro, Milan, Centro Ambrosiano, 1995, pp. 311-328.

31. Iwasaki, *¡Aplaca, Señor, tu ira!*, p. 196; Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Historia del Santo Cristo de los Milagros*, Lima, Editorial Lumen, 1949; Maria Rostworowski Díez Canseco, *Pachacámac y el Señor de los Milagros*, Lima, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1992; José Antonio Benito Rodríguez, "El Señor de los Milagros, rostro de un pueblo. El protagonismo de la Hermandad de las Nazarenas", in *Los crucificados, religiosidad, cofradías y arte: Actas del Simposium 3/6-IX-2010*, ed. by Francisco Javier Campos and Fernández de Sevilla, Madrid, Real Centro Universitario Escorial-María Cristina, 2010, pp. 1025-1052; José Antonio Benito Rodríguez, "Historia del Señor de los Milagros de las Nazarenas", in *El rostro de un pueblo (Estudios sobre el Señor de los Milagros)*, ed. by Gian Corrado Peluso, Lima, Fondo Editorial UCSS, 2005, pp. 131-257.

32. Vargas Ugarte, *Historia del Santo Cristo*.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

In the 1670s, after recovering from an illness, a certain Antonio de León carried out some conservation work in the chapel and began to promote the cult, which attracted numerous worshippers. The number of people flocking to the chapel and the failure to found a confraternity drove the parish priest of the church of San Marcello to request the intervention of the viceroy and the ecclesiastical authorities of the archdiocese, which ordered an inspection in 1671. The upshot was that the institutions decided to get rid of the image to prevent what were defined as “improper assemblies”.³⁵ When the time came to carry out the viceroy’s orders, the person appointed by the authorities to eliminate the image and destroy the wall was prevented from doing so because he suddenly lost his strength. The same thing happened to all those – both workmen and royal officials – who attempted to carry out the task in succession.³⁶ The viceroy therefore decided to suspend the order and went in person to view the miraculous image. The result of this visit was that the popular cult came to be supported not only by the institutional and religious authorities of the viceroyalty but also by the Crown, as demonstrated by a *real cedula* dated 19 April 1681 addressed to the archbishop, Liñán y Cisneros. In this document, the sovereign recognised the miracle of the image of the Crucifixion and ordered sufficient funds to be allocated to the chapel that was being built:

haviéndose manifestado pintado en la pared de un muladar de esta ciudad una imagen de Cristo Crucificado, la mandó borrar por la indecencia del lugar el conde de Castellar, que fue mi Virrey de esa Provincia, y que haviéndola ido a executar un indio, quedó a la razón inmóvil, a vista de mucha gente, oscureciéndose al mismo tiempo el cielo, siendo las cuatro de la tarde y lloviendo con gran exceso, por cuyas manifestaciones y otras que a obrado esta Santa Imagen se intitula el Cristo de los Milagros y por esa causa se le dio culto y comenzó a fabricar una Capilla que no se ha podida acabar, por no haver tenido caudal, suplicándome que atendiendo a ello, fuese servido de mandar aplicar para el efecto alguna porción en vacantes de Obispado de estos Reinos. Y haviéndose visto por los de mi Consejo de Indias, ha perecido rogaros (como lo hago) asistáis a la fábrica de la Capilla con todos los medios que pudiereis por ser obra tan piadosa y en que intresa al mayor servicio de Dios en la beneración y culto de esta Santa Imagen.³⁷

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-22.

36. Luis Millones, Hiroyasu Tomoeda, *La Cruz del Perú*, Seville, Universidad de Sevilla, 2011, p. 75.

37. Rostworowski Díez Canseco, *Pachacámac*, p. 154.

The canonisation process of St Rose of Lima – the first *criolla* saint and future patron saint of the viceroyalty – was concluded in April 1671, and in the same year, the *Virgen del Rosario* (Our Lady of the Rosary) predicted a miraculous victory over the English pirates. Moreover, just a few years later, the beatification of the archbishop of Lima, Toribio Mogrovejo, was announced. However, alongside the miracles and happy outcomes of the canonisations and beatifications, woeful and tragic events also took place as a constant reminder of divine warnings about future occurrences. Around the same time, brother Martín de Porres died in the odour of sanctity and the viceroyalty had to address a series of disasters connected with extreme climatic events – caused by the El Niño oscillation – and several minor earthquakes.³⁸

In the context of this series of inexplicable and miraculous happenings, in the following years, devotion to the *Cristo de los Milagros* continued to grow. When Lima was struck again by three destructive seismic tremors on 20 October 1687, the fragile wall bearing the image once again remained unscathed although the earthquake had destroyed the surrounding buildings and the finest palaces in the city. While the new miracle had been acknowledged and the people had duly invoked the protection of the image,³⁹ in 1687 devotion to the *Cristo de los Milagros* as a protector from earthquakes was not as common as that to the Cuzco *Cristo de los Temblores*, whose cult was already consolidated and widespread.

At the beginning of the 18th century, the chapel of the *Cristo de los Milagros* was annexed to the Nazarenas convent.⁴⁰ At the time of the 1746 earthquake, the violence of which profoundly altered the geography of the city and the surrounding territory, the image of the *Cristo de los Milagros* once again survived intact and a copy of it painted on canvas was carried on a long procession that continued for two days through the devastated streets and squares, churches and convents of the city.⁴¹ Following the catastrophe of 1746, the *Cristo de los Milagros* was elected as the protector of the city from earthquakes, going to join the traditional patron saints of

38. Iwasaki, *¡Aplaca, Señor, tu ira!*, pp. 196-197; Seiner Lizárraga, *Historia de los sismos*.

39. Vargas Ugarte, *Historia del Santo Cristo*; Benito Rodríguez, “El Señor de los Milagros”.

40. On the convent of the Nazarenas Carmelitas Descalzas nuns, see: Vargas Ugarte, *Historia del Santo Cristo*, pp. 83 ff.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 91-95.

the city and protectors from disaster. Finally, in 1766 Pope Clement XIII granted permission for a confraternity devoted specifically to the *Cristo de los Milagros*, in acknowledgement of the miracles and popular devotion.⁴²

3. *Reactions to the catastrophe: the institutions and viceroy*

Although the regular and secular clergy did their best to respond to the spiritual needs of their faithful, the absence of the archbishop was deeply felt: Melchor Liñán y Cisneros had been wounded in the earthquake and still had not returned to Lima several days afterwards. To make up for the absence of this crucial figure, the viceroy, Don Melchor de Navarra y Rocafull, Duke de la Palata, took over some of the functions of the highest religious authority in the viceroyalty, in particular that of leading processions through the streets of the city and of exhorting the citizens to sincere religious sentiments.⁴³ On the other hand, the viceroy's visibility in the religious sphere went hand in hand with censure of the *cabildo eclesiástico* and the Archbishop of Lima, accused of inertia in the face of the catastrophe and of having failed to recognise the miraculous events that preceded the earthquake.⁴⁴ In this complex context, from the very first tremor, the religious orders played a leading role in providing spiritual support and in the penitential rituals. More specifically, the good relations between the viceroy and the Society of Jesus were strengthened further. On one side, this allowed the royal representative to enjoy concrete backing within the ecclesiastical government at a time of crisis; on the other side, it gave the Jesuits a powerful ally in their policy aimed at gaining recognition for saints and blesseds belonging to the Society.⁴⁵

However, the spiritual support offered to the people of Lima was not enough: material needs had to be addressed, buildings had to be repaired or rebuilt and the latent social conflicts had to be kept under control.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 96.

43. On processions as rituals and manifestations of religiosity in the wake of natural disasters, see María Eugenia Petit-Breuilh Sepúlveda, "Religiosidad y rituales hispanos en América ante los desastres (siglos XVI-XVII): las procesiones", *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 35 (2017), pp. 83-115.

44. Domenico Cecere, "Subterranea conspiración. Terremoti, comunicazione e politica nella monarchia di Carlo II", *Studi Storici*, 4 (2019), pp. 811-844: 835.

45. Coello de la Rosa, "La destrucción de Nínive", pp. 156-157.

The viceroy was not daunted and took charge of the reconstruction work directly through an emergency government, as recorded in the report addressed to his successor in 1688: “cargaron sobre mi cuidado todos los oficios de la república, porque todos se hallaron desamparados, llamando a cada uno la obligación natural de su conservación y de su familia”.⁴⁶ Although the viceregal palace was damaged, the viceroy did not leave the city but moved to temporary quarters in the *Plaza Mayor*, where he called a meeting of the *cabildo municipal*, whereas the sessions of the *Audiencia* had to be suspended for several months.⁴⁷ The emergency situation in the city meant that the traditional formalities of government could not be maintained:

no pudo quedar forma de gobierno, y así saliendo de las reglas ordinarias nombré solo dos alcaldes ordinarios [...], no hubo tribunales ni se pudiera juntar los ministros en mucho tiempo, y sólo estaba el virrey en un desacomodado toldo en la plaza, despachando cuanto se había de ejecutar por todos los oficios de la república sin poder guardar formalidad en ningún despacho pero reconociendo a Dios para que comunicase alientos para la tolerancia con paciencia.⁴⁸

Already just a few hours after the earthquake, with the support of the *cabildo*, the viceroy addressed himself to preserving public order and providing for the immediate needs of the people. He responded rapidly to the demand for food and for other basic services, while also setting in motion a long-term plan for the reconstruction of the city.⁴⁹ However, the Duke de la Palata was also convinced that, to succeed in his purposes, he needed to have control over the population, which was scattered over a huge area both inside and outside the city, hence lacking the bonds connecting them to the civic institutions.⁵⁰

46. *Relación de don Merlchor*, in Hanke, *Los virreyes españoles*, vol. VI, p. 114.

47. Vargas Ugarte, *Historia General del Perú*, vol. III, pp. 381-382; Judith Mansilla, “El gobierno colonial de Lima y su capacidad de manejo de la crisis frente al terremoto de 1687: respuestas del virrey y del cabildo secular”, *Revista del Instituto Riva-Agüero*, 1/1 (2016), pp. 11-37: 22.

48. *Relación de don Merlchor*, in Hanke, *Los virreyes españoles*, vol. VI, pp. 114-115.

49. Mansilla, “El gobierno colonial”, pp. 14-15; María Antonia Duran Montero, “Movimientos sísmicos en Lima durante el siglo XVII. Algunas consideraciones sobre sus efectos en la arquitectura”, *Laboratorio de Arte*, 5 (1992), pp. 195-204.

50. Mansilla, “El gobierno colonial”, p. 20; Mansilla, “La población de Lima”, pp. 58-61.

At the first meeting with the *cabildo municipal* to make the decisions necessary for the reorganisation of the city, the viceroy decided to consult the capitular records of 1586, when another particularly violent earthquake had isolated the city.⁵¹ The earthquake of 1687 was, in fact, the latest in a long series of destructive quakes that had struck the city of Lima and its surroundings. Following that of 1586, another was recorded in 1609,⁵² and the most recent one was in 1678.⁵³ The reading of the *actos capitulares*, attested in the report of Father Buendía, not only provided the civic authorities with a memory of the past but also offered models for direct and immediate actions to address the emergency situation. One of the viceroy's first decisions was to appoint a number of *alcades ordinarios adicionales* to operate alongside the existing officials so as to strengthen the government of the city and to facilitate the distribution of foodstuffs in the various areas in which the people had taken refuge. These were joined by seven commissioners who, together with an *alarife*, could appraise the condition of the buildings located on the main thoroughfares and proceed to the demolition of those considered most dangerous.⁵⁴ The viceroy rapidly gave permission for the rebuilding of numerous houses and launched the implementation of security measures for the public buildings and several churches.⁵⁵ He also ordered the royal officials to carefully monitor economic transactions and the prices of basic goods, including building materials, to prevent uncontrolled increases.⁵⁶

Having addressed the most urgent needs and reorganised the city government, the viceroy turned his attention to the rebuilding of the city. He proposed several significant changes to the urban layout, but came up against the stumbling block of the deficit of the *Real Hacienda*.⁵⁷

51. Mansilla, "El gobierno colonial", p. 22.

52. Sarissa Carneiro, "Temblor De Lima (1609) by Pedro De Oña: Poetics of Disaster and Viceregal Praise", *Anales De Literatura Chilena*, 17/26 (2016), pp. 133-153.

53. *Terremotos*, p. 25.

54. *Relación de don Merlchor*, in Hanke, *Los virreyes españoles*, vol. VI, p. 114.

55. Vargas Ugarte, *Historia General del Perú*, vol. III, p. 415.

56. Mansilla, "El gobierno colonial", pp. 23-24.

57. On the crisis of the *Real Hacienda* and the viceroy's attempts at rebalancing, see Margaret E. Crahan, "The Administration of Don Melchor de Navarra y Rocafull, Duque de la Palata: Viceroy of Peru, 1681-1689", *The Americas*, 27/4 (1971), pp. 389-412; Kenneth Andrien, *Crisis y decadencia. El Virreinato del Perú en el siglo XVII*, Lima, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2011, pp. 67-106. On the spread of corruption in Lima and the sale of benefices, see Francisco Andújar Castillo, Antonio Feros, Pilar Ponce Leiva, "Corrupción y

The reconstruction projects – submitted to a special *junta*, the *Junta de Tribunales* – proposed the demolition of the uninhabitable viceregal palace and the construction of a new one, alongside the restoration of the palace of the *cabildo municipal* and the city prison.⁵⁸ The question of the restoration of the cathedral proved more difficult since the *cabildo eclesiástico*, supported by the archbishop, refused to make its economic contribution, arguing that, according to the *Real Patronato*, the sovereign, and hence the *Real Hacienda*, was responsible for all the costs necessary for reconstruction.⁵⁹ Considering the critical situation of the viceregal coffers, which could not meet the huge costs envisaged, the Duke de la Palata appealed to both the king and the pope, asking to be granted the funds from the vacant sees of the *cabildo eclesiástico* for twenty years or even in perpetuity, so that they could be used for the restoration of the cathedral. Although the viceroy had obtained the support of the *Consejo de Indias*, the pope granted him only the income from two vacant positions for a period of six years.⁶⁰

Despite the positive outcomes of the viceroy's commitment, the reconstruction of the city was completed only under his successor Melchor Portocarrero, Count of Monclova, who arrived in Peru in 1688. Within a short time, the city had returned to its former splendour, but the restoration of the cathedral was not completed until the 1690s as a result of the ongoing conflicts with the *cabildo eclesiástico* for coverage of the costs.⁶¹

mecanismos de control en la Monarquía Hispánica: una revisión crítica”, *Tiempos modernos: Revista Electrónica de Historia Moderna*, 8/35 (2017), pp. 284-311; Pilar Ponce Leiva, “Debates y consensos en torno a la corrupción en la América hispana y portuguesa, siglos XVI-XVIII. Presentación”, *Revista Complutense de Historia de América*, 43 (2017), pp. 15-19; Juan Carlos De Orellana Sanchez, “De la crítica a la reforma. Pensamiento político, económico, y visión de reino en las denuncias indianas de corrupción (s. XVII)”, *Historia y Memoria*, 19 (2019), pp. 67-120.

58. Mansilla, “El gobierno colonial”, pp. 29-30; Duran Montero, “Movimientos sísmicos”, pp. 200-203.

59. Mansilla, “El gobierno colonial”, p. 31; Duran Montero, “Movimientos sísmicos”, p. 200.

60. *Bula del papa Inocencio XI al rey Carlos II, dando licencia para que la cuarta parte de las rentas y frutos de todas las dignidades, canonjías y prebendas eclesiásticas y prociones y otros bienes vacantes y por vacar en la diócesis de Lima [...] se apliquen a la construcción de las Iglesias de Lima, destruidas por los terremotos*, 1689, AGI, Mapas y Planos, Bulas y Breves, 199.

61. Vargas Ugarte, *Historia General del Perú*, vol. IV, pp. 12-14; Duran Montero, “Movimientos sísmicos”, pp. 195-204.

According to Judith Mansilla, the dynamism and planning of the viceroy Duke de la Palata from the very first hours following the earthquake can be seen as a demonstration of the organisational capacity of the viceregal government, contradicting the image of inefficiency that the historiography has associated with the rule of the last Spanish Habsburgs.⁶² In effect, the efficient responses of the viceroy, the *cabildo* and the *alcades* illustrate that the Duke de la Palata's government managed the crisis competently and promptly.⁶³ Mansilla argues that, "frente a la pálida figura de Carlos II, el duque de la Palata fue un líder que supo enfrentar el caos y confusión de Lima y su población luego del terremoto y tsunami de 1687. Su actuación durante el periodo de reconstrucción ofrece una imagen evidentemente positiva del gobierno colonial".⁶⁴

The difficulties of reconstruction were then further aggravated by the consequences of another earthquake that took place in 1690, and by a devastating agricultural crisis that struck the countryside around Lima from 1692 on. Various 18th-century chronicles and studies have sustained the theory that the failure in wheat production was a direct consequence of the earthquake of 1687, which had "poisoned" the soil, rendering it permanently infertile and calling for the importation of huge quantities of wheat from Chile. This question has already been addressed by Guillermo Céspedes del Castillo, Demetrio Ramos and Ruggero Romano, among others. Only Pablo Emilio Pérez-Mallaina, in his most recent research, has demonstrated the lack of grounds for this theory by studying the coeval sources conserved in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville.⁶⁵ These documents have allowed him to observe that, as far back as the 1690s, it was a well-known fact that there was no causal link between the earthquake and the agricultural crisis. The failure of production was due to other factors, and the decision to import Chilean wheat was linked to the economic decisions of the major Peruvian landowners.⁶⁶

62. Mansilla, "El gobierno colonial", p. 15.

63. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

65. Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaina, *Retrato de una ciudad en crisis. La sociedad limeña ante el movimiento sísmico de 1746*, Seville, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas-Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos-Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2001, p. 451.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 451-467; Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaina, "La fabricación de un mito: el terremoto de 1687 y la ruina de los cultivos de trigo en el Perú", *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 57/1 (2000), pp. 69-88.

4. *The heroic viceroy in the circulation of the news*

4.1. *Fake news? The arrival of news at the court in the correspondence of the nuncio in Madrid*

In the month of July 1688, news of an earthquake that had seriously damaged numerous sacred buildings was already circulating at the Madrid court, to the extent that it became one of the main subjects in the correspondence between the nuncio, Mons. Durazzo, and the Holy See.⁶⁷ But this was not a tremor in a distant land, frequently subject to such disasters, but a phenomenon much closer to home that affected both royal and papal interests. On 5 June 1688, in the Viceroyalty of Naples, the area of Samnium – and in particular the pontifical enclave of Benevento – was struck by a major earthquake that was also felt in the capital, causing grave damage and numerous victims. On 11 June, the viceroy sent an initial report to Madrid about what had happened and the current situation in the province and city of Naples, followed up by a great deal of further information addressed to the sovereign and the *Consejo de Italia*.⁶⁸

When, between the end of June and the first days of July, news of the earthquake in the Viceroyalty of Peru and the destruction of the city of Lima reached Madrid from England, the first reaction of the court and the papal diplomats was one of incredulity. The coincidence of the events, and above all the fact that the news came from England and Holland, led to a conviction that the news was fake. As the nuncio observed in a letter sent to Rome on 1 July 1688:

Questa nuova che d'Inghilterra è stata avvisata per verissima non viene in forma per poterle dar credito perché sebbene si produce copia di lettera del padre Commissario Generale di San Francisco residente nel Perù scritta in Lima il 29 ottobre e concepita con tali inverisimili e contiene cose impossibili che fossero a notizia di quel religioso il giorno 29 di ciò che dice esser succeduto lo stesso giorno 23 in altre parti lontane che si può credere che detta lettera sii supposta. Oltre che qui si hanno lettere da Panama di tal data che se

67. Matteo Sanfilippo, “Durazzo Marcello”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. XLII (1993).

68. Cecere, “*Subterranea conspiración*”, pp. 821-824; Alessandro Tuccillo, “Abolire il gioco per placare l’ira divina. La diplomazia pontificia e il terremoto del 1688 a Napoli”, *Mediterranea. Ricerche storiche*, 51 (2021), pp. 181-206.

a Lima fosse succeduto il suddetto disastro il giorno 23 ottobre non sarebbe fattibile, che qui non se ne avesse havuto la notitia per quella via.⁶⁹

Again, on 15 July, he reconfirmed that a letter originating from Cartagena had arrived at court that did not speak of the “terremoto et altre disgrazie di Lima e di quella costa”.⁷⁰ The fleet coming from America, which had set sail in November of that year, had in fact arrived safely in Spain without any information about it. However, as the days passed, the truth of the news was confirmed, and the ways in which the information had circulated first in England and Holland, only reaching Madrid later, began to be clarified. On 29 July, the nuncio reported that a messenger from the Viceroy of Peru, coming from San Lucar, had recently arrived at court and had confirmed the news, although “ancora non si sa con distinzione quello che è accaduto in Lima et altre parti del Perù per il terremoto però è certo ch’è stato grande e che ha causato grandi rovine d’edificij particolarmente in Lima”.⁷¹

The correspondence between the nuncio and the Holy See also reveals how the news managed to reach, and circulate in, England and Holland before Madrid. Just a few hours after the earthquake, the viceroy had sent a messenger to bear to court as soon as possible news of the disaster and of the state of dire necessity existing in Lima and Callao. The messenger had travelled by boat to Guatemala and then on to the port of Veracruz, but he did not manage to embark until the month of May and hence to arrive at court before the summer.⁷² However, at the same time, the news of the earthquake had spread rapidly in the Atlantic ports until it reached Jamaica, a territory belonging to England. This was why the English and Dutch ships had brought the news to Europe first.

Between June and August 1688, the news of the earthquake in Lima, and the consequent “duelo” of the court, spread rapidly among the nobility too. Nevertheless, the broad circulation of the information did not offer certainty about the news, since the numerous voices narrating the events offered different versions. A perfect example of this is the letter sent from Madrid by Jacinto de Arcayna on 30 June 1688 to Pascual Francisco de Borja Centelles, 10th Duke of Gandía. The letter recounted how the news

69. AAV, Segr. Stato Spagna, 167, f. 469r.

70. *Ibid.*, f. 492r.

71. *Ibid.*, f. 514r.

72. *Ibid.*, f. 515v.

of the tsunami that had struck Lima and the port of Callao came from Holland and England, and that each channel provided similar information but with different details. Some related that the sea had risen so high as to leave several ships up to three leagues inland, whereas others maintained that the entire city had not been flooded but only a large part of it and some neighbouring places. Another aspect that emerged in the narrations was the devotion of the city in search of divine aid, as well as the religiosity of the viceroy, who conducted a public penance in the streets after receiving a revelation about what was going to happen.⁷³

It was not until the beginning of August that some letters from Lima arrived at court, making it possible to have more detailed information about the earthquake of 20 October 1687 and the tsunami that had struck the port of Callao. Finally, on 5 August, the nuncio was able to provide the Holy See with some more precise information about what had happened and the extent of the damage:

quell'horibile terremoto [...] che scottendo tre volte gl'edificii in termine di tre hore quasi tutti gl'atterrò e particolarmente le chiese e palazzi più nobili. Li morti si suppone ascendessero a mille. Tra chiese e luoghi pii ne restarono abbattuti 52. Questo disastro si stese anche in altre parti et il Callao Porto di Lima restò tutto distrutto meno le muraglie che restarono in piedi, un altro luogo fu assorbito dal mare in che perirono in 170 persone che lo componevano.⁷⁴

The information originating from Lima, later partially recorded in the correspondence of the nuncio, also revealed the parlous state of trade in the Viceroyalty of Peru. In the report entrusted to the messenger, the viceroy had in fact requested that galleons be sent as soon as possible with “generi

73. “Carta de Antonio Sánchez a [Pascual Francisco de Borja Centelles, X] duque de Gandía informándole del terremoto y ruina de Lima y el duelo en la Corte, 30 junio 1688”, in AHNob, OSUNA, CT.112, D.23; “Carta de Felipe de la Guerra a [Gregorio de Silva Mendoza, X] duque del Infantado informándole del terremoto que asoló Lima, junio 1688”, in AHNob, OSUNA, CT.62, D.12; “Carta de Félix Pascual a [Pascual Francisco Borja Centelles Ponce de León, X] Duque de Gandía dando [...] referencia a una relación inclusa de lo sucedido en el terremoto de Lima [...], 1 luglio 1687”, in AHNob, OSUNA, CT.79, D.1; “Carta de Jacinto Arcayna a [Pascual Francisco de Borja Centelles, X] duque de Gandía comentando el terremoto de Lima, las rogativas hechas por el virrey Melchor de Navarra [y Rocafull, duque de la Palata,] y los toros de la Corte”, in AHNob, OSUNA, CT.112, D.6.

74. AAV, Segr. Stato Spagna, 167, f. 515r.

d'Europa", confirming on the other hand that "la plata per il commercio non mancava", part of which had already arrived in Panama.⁷⁵

4.2. *An official communication: the viceroy's report*

In addition to the private correspondence of the court and of the Spanish nobility abroad – which enabled a broad circulation of news – numerous reports, records and chronicles were also written in the months immediately following 20 October 1687, especially by the religious.⁷⁶ These accounts also included the letters and reports sent to the king by the viceroy de la Palata, who sought to portray objectively what had happened, and in particular the damage suffered by the buildings in the city. These informative accounts and reports were aimed not only at communicating to the Crown what was happening in the viceroyalty, requesting money and aid from the *Real Hacienda* for the reconstruction, but they were also documents that could be used in the viceroy's favour during the *proceso de residencia* at the end of his mandate.

It was not until 8 December 1687 that the viceroy informed the sovereign in detail about the earthquake and tsunami that had struck the city of Lima, in a long and detailed letter that left the same day with the fleet heading for Panama and reached the court in the summer of 1688.⁷⁷ As he explained to the king, it had not been possible to send the communication earlier, since the previous fleet had left on 19 October, just a few hours before the earthquake, on the viceroy's insistence that it should not tarry any longer and, fortunately, it had not suffered damage or delay from the subsequent events.⁷⁸ This made it impossible for him to send communications regarding the disaster that, just a few hours later, was to strike the city of Lima and most of the Peruvian coast.⁷⁹

In his letter, the viceroy retraced the sequence of tragic events, emphasising the causal link between men's sins and divine punishment, explaining how the emergency had been addressed in the hours immediately

75. *Ibid.*, ff. 514r-515r.

76. "Lettera Annuā, 1688", in ARSI, Perù 17, ff. 55-58; "Historiae, 1687", in ARSI, Perù 20, ff. 275-281.

77. The letter sent by the viceroy to the Crown is in AGI, Lima, 87; *Copia de carta del Duque de la Palata*, Lima, 8 December 1687, in BNE, Ms. 9375.

78. *Ibid.*, f. 144v.

79. *Ibid.*, f. 142.

following and outlining some of the operations that would be necessary for reconstruction.⁸⁰ The first part of the letter was devoted entirely to the description of the earthquake which, with three tremors over the space of two and a half hours, left Lima “destruida y ruinada”, like the port of Callao, where not a single house had been left standing, which was then overwhelmed by a tsunami that further aggravated the situation.⁸¹ The viceroy also recorded that even his palace in the *Plaza Mayor* had not withstood the quakes and how, although he was risking his own life, he immediately concerned himself with saving the inhabitants of the city and was directly involved in the emergency aid: “aviendo dejado mi familia en medio de un patio grande de Palacio [...] salí a la plaza a reconocer las ruinas y la gente que dellas se avía recojido para consolarla y dar la providencia que fuesse menester en tan espantoso accidente”.⁸² The letter went on to dwell on the material damage and the victims of the disaster, also providing an initial analysis of the subsequent reconstruction.

The earthquake had struck not only the capital of the viceroyalty but had been felt all along the coast, from Chaucay as far as Arica, a distance of around 280 miles, causing severe damage in the most important cities.⁸³ Despite the nature of the disaster, the viceroy noted that the death toll did not appear to be particularly high, either in Lima – where it was estimated at around 200 victims – or in the other cities affected. This was due mainly to the fact that the first two tremors that struck the viceroyalty on the night between 19 and 20 October were less violent than the third, allowing most of the population to abandon their houses.⁸⁴ Among the wounded who managed to survive, there was also the Archbishop of Lima, Melchor Liñán y Cisneros, who was staying in one of the houses in the port at the time. This house collapsed with the force of the quake and, although wounded, the archbishop was extracted from the rubble alive and fortunately also managed to save himself from the flood caused by the ensuing tsunami.⁸⁵ As he stressed in his letter

80. *Ibid.*, f. 142rv. An analysis of the reports regarding the earthquake sent by the viceroy can be found in Cecere, “*Subterranea conspiración*”, pp. 833-836, and in Cecere, “Dall’informazione alla gestione”, pp. 23-25.

81. *Copia de carta del Duque de la Palata*, ff. 142r and 142v.

82. *Ibid.*, f. 142 r.

83. *Ibid.*, f. 143v.

84. *Ibid.*, f. 142v.

85. AAV, Segr. Stato Spagna, 167, f. 143r.

to the sovereign, the viceroy concerned himself with the welfare of the prelate, who was taken to safety in the countryside close to Lima. This appeared not only as a gesture of human compassion but also as an act of institutional support in the emergency, glossing over the differences that had marked the relations between the two up to then.⁸⁶

The viceroy also lay particular emphasis on the need for the physical and symbolic reconstruction of the city, where the majority of the most important buildings were no longer habitable or safe for use. The palace of the viceroy, where the *Audiencia* met, that of the *cabildo municipal* and the prison – edifices that symbolised royal authority and justice – and the cathedral were all particularly badly damaged. The viceroy therefore informed the Crown of the need for a primarily “institutional” reconstruction: finding an appropriate place from which to administer justice and rebuilding the palaces of government. Alongside the material reconstruction of the city, it would also be necessary to address the repercussions of the earthquake on economic activities, in particular the sudden interruption of trade.⁸⁷

The last part of the letter concentrated on acts of penitence and devotion during the earthquake and in the hours immediately following the disaster: “Hanse hecho las penitencias publicas, confesiones y frecuencia de sacramentos que pueden considerarse sobre el presupuesto que ninguno piensa hasta hoy que tiene segura la vida”.⁸⁸ Faced by the wrath of God, the city recognised its sins and sought expiation and forgiveness. Faced with the destruction of the city, the makeshift dwellings and the persistence of the catastrophic phenomena, the viceroy begged God to give him sufficient inner strength to support the population too.

Finally, the Duke de la Palata informed the king that the earthquakes continued in the weeks that followed up to 1 December, when the tremor was followed by the circulation of a rumour that the sea had withdrawn again and that this time the tidal wave would also reach the city of Lima.⁸⁹ Although the viceroy considered the rumour to be unfounded, especially in view of the distance of the city from the coast, it nevertheless triggered

86. On the clashes between the viceroy and the archbishop apropos ecclesiastical immunity, see Crahan, “The Administration”, p. 408.

87. AAV, Segr. Stato Spagna, 167, f. 143v.

88. *Ibid.*, f. 144.

89. *Relación de don Merlchor*, in Hanke, *Los virreyes españoles*, vol. VI, p. 115.

a new wave of panic and repentance among the people, who left their temporary dwellings to seek refuge in the hills. The social crisis had been further aggravated by the looting of abandoned palaces after the October quakes, which the viceroy took measures to put a stop to.⁹⁰

In just a few pages, the Duke de la Palata not only offered an overview of the difficult social and economic situation in the viceroyalty, but above all underscored his own successful intervention in immediate actions to assist the inhabitants. Domenico Cecere has noted that this intention was also linked to the acquisition of legitimisation for the decisions taken during the emergency.⁹¹ In normal circumstances, such decisions could not have been implemented and would not have been accepted by the competing institutions in the viceroyalty,⁹² with the risk of the viceroy being criticised in the *juicio de residencia* at the end of his mandate.

4.3. *The figure of the viceroy in a printed relación*

Travelling together with first news of the earthquake via the ports and courts of Holland and England, there also arrived in Europe an anonymous report titled *Relación del exemplar castigo que embió Dios a la Ciudad de Lima, Cabeça del Peru, y a su Costa de Barlovento, con los espantosos temblores del dia 20 de Octubre del año de 1687*.⁹³ Between late June and early July 1688, a manuscript copy of the *Relación* also reached the Madrid court through Manuel de Belmonte, a Spanish agent in the United Provinces who had received it in a bundle of papers that arrived in Cartagena via Jamaica.⁹⁴

In parallel with the information sent by the viceroy de la Palata, by the viceregal officials and by the exponents of the ecclesiastical institutions, there are several written accounts of the events that can be fully comprised within the genre of the *relaciones de sucesos*. The disaster had aroused great interest, and such reports employed a variety of perspectives in making

90. AAV, Segr. Stato Spagna, 167, f. 144v. References are also in Vargas Ugarte, *Historia General del Perú*, vol. III, p. 414.

91. Cecere, "Subterranea conspiración", p. 834.

92. On the government of emergency in the early modern period, see *Il governo dell'emergenza. Poteri straordinari e di guerra in Europa tra XVI e XX secolo*, ed. by Francesco Benigno and Luca Scuccimarra, Rome, Viella, 2007.

93. *Relación del exemplar castigo*, in BNE, VE/1461/1.

94. Cecere, "Subterranea conspiración", p. 837.

the event accessible to a vast public. Rather than simply narrating the catastrophe, these accounts could be of a religious or devotional character, acting as moralistic warnings against similar events in the future, or they could again exalt the actions of the viceroy.

The *Relación del exemplar castigo*, consisting of eight pages in prose, was printed in Lima in the same year as the earthquake, and was probably composed by the theologian Joseph Buendía, S. J.⁹⁵ It enjoyed a considerable circulation in the American and European territories of the *Monarquía* and was reprinted in Mexico City, Lisbon and Naples.⁹⁶

The most prominent figure in the account is the Duke de la Palata, whose commitment, dedication and devotion are stressed, illustrating an intention that was not only informative but also distinctly political and religious. In view of the processes for the beatification of numerous Jesuit fathers, such as Francis Borja (1510-1572) in 1670, the Society of Jesus needed the support of the Crown and its territorial representatives.⁹⁷ In fact, unlike the other orders, none of the *criollo* Jesuits who had died in the odour of sanctity had yet been admitted for canonisation, and it was only with the arrival of Archbishop Liñán y Cisneros in 1677 that the process for the beatification of Juan de Alloza, S. J. was finally launched.⁹⁸ Considering the studies of Angelo Turchini, the historian Alexandre Coello de la Rosa has recently shed light on how the various religious orders in 17th-century Peru sought to promote their own patron saints, giving rise

95. The attribution of the *Relación* sparked a heated debate in the middle of the 20th century. Based on the studies of the Jesuit, Father José Eugenio de Uriarte, the historian José Toribio Medina proposed that the original author of the account could be Father Francisco López Martínez. However, this interpretation clashed with that of the scholar Enrique Torres Saldamando, who had identified the author as the Jesuit father, Joseph Buendía. The latter interpretation was then confirmed by the Jesuit Father Carlos Sommervogel in a work dealing with the members of the Society of Jesus. See Seiner Lizárraga, *Historia de los sismos*, pp. 49-51.

96. There are various editions of the *Relación* in Spanish, printed in Lisbon and Mexico City, and an Italian translation printed in Naples. See Seiner Lizárraga, *Historia de los sismos*, p. 49; Cecere, “*Subterránea conspiración*”, p. 837.

97. Coello de la Rosa, “La destrucción de Nínive”, p. 156.

98. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-158. Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, “Agencias políticas y políticas de santidad en la beatificación del padre Juan de Alloza, sj (1597-1666)”, *Hispania sacra*, 57/116 (2005), pp. 627-650; Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, *En compañía de ángeles: vida del extático y fervoroso Padre Juan de Alloza, SJ (1597-1666)*, Barcelona, Edicions Bellaterra, 2007.

to reciprocal rivalry. The sanctity policies of the Society of Jesus in the Viceroyalty of Peru were not only a consequence of the self-representative models proposed by the Church but were also shaped by the favour of local political and religious authorities.⁹⁹

Although the exaltation of the viceroy in the *Relación* could appear as deference to the political authority, historian Domenico Cecere has observed that it draws on appraisals and descriptions from the first reports of the viceroy and from the accounts of the religious orders, with particular prominence given to those of the Jesuits.¹⁰⁰ In the prologue, the author specifies that the purpose of the *Relación* is of a devotional and moral character, intended to instil fear in the faithful and to stimulate true repentance so as to placate divine anger, but the political intention also emerges in the exaltation of the viceroy's conduct.¹⁰¹ The main character of the *Relación* is indubitably the viceroy during his management of the most critical phases of the emergency,¹⁰² whereas the archbishop and ecclesiastical authorities appear only in the background, in the portrayal of the processions and the rituals of public penitence.

The first part of the *Relación* continues with the chronological account of the earthquake: the first tremor in the morning, the duration and the collapse of numerous buildings. Interestingly, the report does not record both the tremors that occurred in the morning nor does it explicitly refer to the tidal wave that struck Callao, but records only the last quake and the numerous tremors that continued to strike the city from that day on, forcing the inhabitants to live in the squares, gardens, cloisters of convents or outside the city. In this way, the author illustrated the divine anger brought about by the dissolution of the city, which, in the crisis, realises its sins and repents for them. In the second part of the *Relación*, the Jesuit relates

99. Miguel Gotor, *I beati del papa. Inquisizione santità e obbedienza in età moderna*, Florence, Leo S. Olschki, 2002; Franco Motta, Eleonora Rai, "Strategie di santità. La politica delle canonizzazioni dei gesuiti fra antica e nuova Compagnia (XVII-XX secolo)", in *A la luz de Roma, Santos y santidad en el barroco iberoamericano*, ed. by Fernando Quiles García, José Jaime García Bernal, Paolo Broggio and Marcello Fagiolo Dell'Arco, 3 vols, vol. I, Seville-Rome, Universidad Pablo de Olavide-Roma Tre-Press, 2020, pp. 91-106.

100. "Lettera Annuæ, 1688", in ARSI, Perù 17, ff. 55-58; "Historiae, 1687", in ARSI, Perù 20, ff. 275-281. See also Cecere, "Dall'informazione alla gestione", pp. 23-25.

101. Cecere, "*Subterranea conspiración*", p. 836; Petit-Breuilh Sepúlveda, "Religiosidad y rituales", pp. 83-115.

102. Cecere, "Dall'informazione alla gestione", pp. 31 ff.

the rediscovered devotion and repentance of the people, materialised in processions, public rituals of repentance and sermons delivered by the leading preachers from the city's convents. The dominant figure is the Duke de la Palata, who, in the absence of the archbishop, takes charge of both the material needs of the city and the spiritual needs of its inhabitants. It is he who leads the processions, exhorting penitence from the *Plaza Mayor*, while also arranging assistance for the wounded and governing the city as well as possible.

After this comes a description of the damage suffered by the city, and in particular by the magnificent religious buildings, along with an initial estimate of the costs necessary for the reconstruction. The *Relación* ends with a reflection on the destruction of Lima and the “repetidos avisos del cielo”: the city had been alerted to the divine anger by numerous warnings, including the earthquake of 1586, the sermons of a “predicador de temblores” and the miracle of the tears of the statue of the Virgin, defined as “del aviso”. However, the people had ignored these signs, bringing about their own condemnation to God's anger. Hence, the narration draws upon the *topos* of divine punishment, contextualising the disaster in a supernatural framework.¹⁰³ In this way, death and destruction become a consequence of human sin and of man's blindness to the numerous divine signs demanding repentance and conversion.

5. *The memory of the past and the government in times of emergency*

In the *Relación del exemplar castigo*, Father Buendía included among the premonitory signs of the imminent destruction of Lima by the earthquake that had struck the city in July 1586 while the Count of Villar was the viceroy of Peru.¹⁰⁴ However, he did not even mention the other major earthquake of 1609 or the more recent one of 1678, during the interim viceregal government of Archbishop Liñan y Cisneros.¹⁰⁵ It is interesting to consider the expediency of the parallel made with an event

103. *Ibid.*

104. On Fernando Torres de Portugal y Mesía, Count of Villar, Viceroy of Peru from 1584 to 1589, see Vargas Ugarte, *Historia General del Perú*, vol. II, in particular pp. 291-310 on the earthquake of 1586 and the figure of the viceroy.

105. Pedro García y Sanz, *Apuntes para la historia eclesiástica del Perú*, 2 vols, Lima, Tip. de la “Sociedad”, 1873-1876, vol. II, pp. 10-12.

so distant in time. There are many analogies between the earthquake that struck Lima and Callao in July 1586 and that of October 1687, starting from the chronological coincidence: almost exactly 100 years later, the capital of the viceroyalty and its port had to address a similar situation of emergency brought about by a natural disaster of vast proportions. In both cases, the violence of the quakes seriously damaged many buildings in the city, including the cathedral and the palace of the viceroy, calling for major reconstruction work. Moreover, both in 1586 and in 1687 the port of Callao was destroyed by a tsunami that cut off the city of Lima and obstructed immediate communications with the Crown. The last analogy is that of the devotion of the population, which on both occasions was terrified and turned to the religious in contrite processions of penitence.

However, comparison of the narration of the earthquake of 1586 made by the Count of Villar¹⁰⁶ and that of the earthquake of 1687 made by the Duke de la Palata reveals several interesting differences. Although both had sent the sovereign a letter-memoir a few weeks after the respective earthquakes, providing an initial appraisal of the disaster and the necessary reconstruction, only in the Duke de la Palata's missive did the figure of the viceroy emerge as a "hero", ready to address the catastrophe with resolute pragmatism so as to guarantee rapid reconstruction and the continuity of the shipments of silver to Spain. This image was flanked by that of the viceroy as a devout man who was close to the Church, despite the criticisms that had been made regarding his ecclesiastical policy. In the absence of the archbishop, who had been wounded, it was he who mediated the relations between civil and ecclesiastical institutions and religious orders, who led the processions and who made himself a paragon of generosity in the eyes of the people.

Leaving aside the eulogistic or self-aggrandising accounts that reached the court, the viceroy's capacity for reaction was not due only to the experience he had acquired during previous mandates, but also drew on the knowledge acquired and the information collected during earlier earthquakes that had struck Peru. If, as Arndt Brendecke has emphasised,¹⁰⁷

106. Roberto Levillier, *Gobernantes del Perú. Cartas y Papeles. Siglo XVI*, 14 vols, vol. X, Madrid, Colección de Publicaciones Históricas de la Biblioteca del Congreso Argentino, 1925, pp. 171-181, 183-186.

107. Arndt Brendecke, *Imperio e información. Funciones del saber en el dominio colonial español*, Madrid-Frankfurt, Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2016, pp. 16, 33.

familiarity with the territory based on a systematic accumulation of knowledge is necessary for effective regulatory and governmental intervention even in normal times, it becomes absolutely fundamental to timely action in the wake of exceptional events such as a devastating earthquake. On this point, in his *Relación*, Father Buendía in effect stressed the fact that, before addressing the emergency, the viceroy wanted to read the records drawn up by the *cabildo municipal* at the time of the earlier earthquake of 1586. Thus, the Jesuit's account illustrates the viceroy's awareness that knowledge of the territory and of past events was necessary in order to be able to act for the best in the present.

Therefore, memory of the past and the circulation of information about similar events, even distant in time, allowed the Duke de la Palata and the royal officials to address the situation of crisis and to govern efficiently during the emergency, making it possible to portray the viceroy as a heroic figure directly engaged with the needs of the people and the city.

VALERIA ENEA

Seeking the Protector Saint: Cults and Devotions in Palermo after the 1693 Earthquake*

1. Introduction

La Domenica 11 del detto mese ad ore venti, e tre quarti la mano di quel Dio, che *aspicit terram, et facit eam fremere*, mossa dalla sua giustissima Ira provocata dalle nostre sceleragini si fè à sentire con un terribilissimo Tremuoto per isvegliare nel sonno delle colpe i Peccatori illetarghiti.¹

Following the disastrous earthquakes of Lima in 1687 and of Naples in 1688, in January 1693 another of the domains governed by King Charles II of Spain – the Kingdom of Sicily – was also put sorely to the test by a seismic upheaval. In the letter cited above, the words used by the Palermo priest Alessandro Burgos to introduce the disaster that had just struck the south-eastern part of the island (the Val di Noto) reflect the attitude towards earthquakes and natural disasters in general that was broadly dominant at the end of the 17th century. The earthquake – of biblical derivation – was indeed the sign sent by God to punish the sins of mankind. In actual fact, in the early modern age, the religious interpretation was not the only reading of natural phenomena. Long before the advent of Christianity, Aristotle had used explanations of a naturalistic kind, arguing in his *Meteorology* that the origin of earthquakes resides in the *pneuma*, that is, the “living breath”

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1. Alessandro Burgos, *Lettera del P. Alessandro Burgos scritta ad un suo amico, che contiene le notizie fin’ora avute de danni caggionati in Sicilia da Tremuoti a 9. & 11 gennaio 1693*, Palermo, Agostino Epiro, 1693, p. 106.

imprisoned in the subsoil that gives rise to the movement of the earth. Such theories were originally opposed by the Church, since they tended to diminish the power of God. However, they were later reconsidered as a result of the distinction made by Thomas Aquinas between a *causa prima* of divine origin and a *causa secunda* of natural origin.² According to this solution, earthquakes were none other than the consequence of the interweaving of divine will and natural causes, making up a single interpretative paradigm.

Despite the developments and scientific advances made over the course of the early modern era, the idea that catastrophes were the direct expression of a vindictive deity continued to prevail, although, as recent studies have emphasised, this idea cannot be attributed exclusively to the societies of the *ancien régime*.³ The notion of punishment was further fuelled by the initial reactions to the disaster in the form of devotional practices and public displays of repentance. The recourse to saints who could intercede with God was a fundamental ritual, aimed not only at terminating the calamity but also at securing protection from potential future catastrophes for the city.⁴ The Virgin Mary was recognised as the most effective intermediary with the Almighty. However, when disaster struck, in addition to invoking the Virgin, communities also turned to those saints who had already proved their worth in counteracting the devastating effects of the calamities. These “specialised” figures were made famous in the various territories of the Hispanic Monarchy through the circulation of *relazioni*: reports that glorified their miraculous powers. Alongside them were the local guardians who, on various occasions, had demonstrated their protective capacities.⁵

2. Gerrit Jasper Schenk, “Dis-astri. Modelli interpretativi delle calamità naturali dal Medioevo al Rinascimento”, in *Le calamità ambientali nel tardo Medioevo europeo. Realtà, percezioni, reazioni*, ed. by Gian Maria Varanini, Giuliano Pinto, Gabriella Piccinni and Michael Matheus, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2010, pp. 23-75: 34-37.

3. François Walter, *Catastrofi. Una storia culturale*, Costabissara, Colla Editore, 2009.

4. Virginia García Acosta, “Divinidad y desastres. Interpretaciones, manifestaciones y respuestas”, *Revista de Historia Moderna. Anales de la Universidad de Alicante*, 35 (2017), pp. 46-82; Emanuela Guidoboni, Jean-Paul Poirier, *Storia culturale del terremoto dal mondo antico a oggi*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2019, pp. 154-157.

5. Jussi Hanska, *Strategies of Sanity and Survival: Religious Responses to Natural Disasters in the Middle Ages*, Helsinki, Finnish Literature Society, 2002, pp. 42-45; Jean-Paul Poirier, “Saints as Protectors Against Earthquakes in Popular Culture in Italy and Latin America”, *Earth Science History*, 37/1 (2018), pp. 157-164.

This chapter explores the cults and devotions organised in the city of Palermo in the wake of the 1693 earthquake by examining coeval sources in the form of diaries and printed *relazioni*, as well as the official documentation produced by local and central authorities. Unlike the eastern part of Sicily, which was more frequently struck by natural calamities and therefore more in the habit of turning to the saints for help, Palermo had never before suffered an earthquake of such magnitude. As a result, the disaster offered the civil authorities, namely, the viceroy and the city senate, the archbishop and the religious orders – especially the Jesuits – the chance to strengthen ancient local cults and to foster new heroic models of sanctity through the proclamation of new patron saints. Moreover, for the members of the Society of Jesus, the recent seismic sequence that had struck Peru between 1687 and 1690 had turned out to be extremely propitious for the processes of beatification of those Jesuits who had been particularly active on such occasions.⁶

As has been widely confirmed by studies of sanctity in the early modern period, the cults initially evolved from spontaneous popular devotion. Subsequently, they were organised and codified by institutions, which consolidated their power through the promotion of the saint.⁷ Similar dynamics also emerged in situations of crisis when – to an even greater degree than in normal circumstances – the orientation of devotion became crucial for strengthening and legitimising the prestige of the promoting groups, which risked losing their foothold in the face of the disaster.

Furthermore, after the cult had been exported into the Catholic world through the endorsement of the Church of Rome, the spread of devotion also came within the sphere of competence and interests of the political institutions.⁸ On the one hand, the Hispanic Monarchy activated a process

6. Alexandre Coello de la Rosa, “La destrucción de Nínive: temblores, políticas de santidad y la Compañía de Jesús (1687-1692)”, *Boletín Americanista*, 58 (2008), pp. 149-169.

7. Marina Caffiero, “Santità politica e sistemi di potere”, in *Santità, culti e agiografia. Temi e prospettive*, ed. by Sofia Boesch Gajano, Rome, Viella, 1997, pp. 363-372; Simon Ditchfield, “Thinking with Saints: Sanctity and Society in the Early Modern World”, *Critical Inquiry*, 35/3 (2009), pp. 552-584: 580-583; Valerio Petrarca, *Genesi di una tradizione urbana. Il culto di Santa Rosalia a Palermo in età spagnola*, Palermo, Fondazione Ignazio Buttitta, 2008, pp. 22-23.

8. Sara Cabibbo, “1624, Rosalia, santa globale”, in *Storia mondiale della Sicilia*, ed. by Giuseppe Barone, Bari-Rome, Laterza, 2018, pp. 242-246.

of circulation of the saints in the territories under its control. On the other hand, at the local level, devotion was effectively managed by civil and ecclesiastical authorities, who – with the help of religious orders – were the prime movers behind the insertion, removal or remodelling of a cult during a situation of crisis.⁹

2. *Divine wrath strikes Sicily*

On the night of 9 January 1693, a terrible earthquake struck Sicily, causing serious damage to various places on the eastern coast, including Augusta, Lentini and Noto. Two days later, a second quake of much greater magnitude struck a much larger area, causing major damage not only throughout Sicily but also in southern Calabria and the archipelago of Malta.¹⁰ The epicentre of the earthquake was located off the Ionic coast and also triggered a violent tsunami that devastated the port areas of the cities of Augusta and Syracuse, in particular. The death toll and damage undoubtedly made this one of the most serious disasters of the early modern age: over 40 towns and villages were razed to the ground, and there were around 60,000 victims, mostly concentrated in major cities such as Catania.¹¹ Considering its staggering impact and the problems connected with reconstruction, this is one of the most famous and best-studied earthquakes of the early modern period.¹²

9. Sara Cabibbo, *Il paradiso del magnifico regno. Agiografi, santi e culti nella Sicilia spagnola*, Rome, Viella, 1996, pp. 90-94.

10. Liliane Dufour, “Dopo il terremoto del 1693: la ricostruzione della Val di Noto”, in *Storia d’Italia. Insediamenti e territorio*, ed. by Cesare De Seta, Turin, Einaudi, 1985, pp. 475-498: 475-478.

11. Domenico Ligresti, *Dinamiche demografiche nella Sicilia moderna (1505-1806)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2002, pp. 129-132.

12. José Miguel Delgado Barrado, “El terremoto de Sicilia oriental (Val di Noto) de 1693: análisis de la reacción post sísmica en base cuantitativa y cartográfica”, *Storia Urbana*, 163/2 (2019), pp. 15-39; Liliane Dufour, “La reconstruction religieuse de la Sicile après le séisme de 1693. Une approche des rapports entre histoire urbaine et vie religieuse”, *Mélanges de l’Ecole Française de Rome*, 93/2 (1981), pp. 525-563; Stephen Tobriner, “Safety and Reconstruction of Noto after the Sicilian Earthquake of 1693: The Eighteenth-Century Context”, in *Dreadful Visitations: Confronting Natural Catastrophe in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. by Alessa Johns, New York-London, Routledge, 1999, pp. 49-75.

Despite the destruction of the road network that permitted the regular transit of goods and information between the various parts of the island, the news rapidly reached Palermo, prompting the viceroy to immediately appoint Giuseppe Lanza, Duke of Camastra, as *vicario generale*. His duty was to undertake the emergency aid operations with the assistance of several military engineers and general commissioners, and to send to the office of the viceroy detailed information about the dramatic situation in the places affected by the earthquake.¹³

The devastating effects of the event gave it a major “media impact”, and in the weeks immediately following, news of the aftermath of the earthquake began to circulate in the most important cities in Italy and in the rest of Europe. The account of Alessandro Burgos mentioned above was particularly popular; it was first published in Palermo and then translated and printed in no less than five other languages.¹⁴

In actual fact, such a broad circulation of information was nothing new at the end of the 17th century. Even in the previous century, there had been a vast production of printed *relazioni*, broadsides, pamphlets and *avvisi* of an informative and educational character, provoking in the readers and listeners of the time a novel interest in the contemporary world.¹⁵ Moreover, the *ancien régime* societies displayed a particular interest in news concerning natural phenomena. Just as with the major disasters of the contemporary age, the circulation of information about such extraordinary events not only satisfied readers’ curiosity but was also of help in coping with the trauma.¹⁶ At the same time, it also responded to the need to find explanations about the origin of the disaster.

The earthquake in Sicily even attracted the attention of members of the Royal Society of London, who assigned several Italian and British

13. Dufour, “Dopo il terremoto del 1693”, pp. 478-479.

14. Stefano Condorelli, “Le tremblement de terre de Sicile de 1693 et Europe: diffusion des nouvelles et retentissement”, *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica*, 2 (2013), pp. 139-166: 150.

15. *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Brendan Dooley, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010; Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of the News: How the World Came to Know about Itself*, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 2014.

16. Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. 91-92; Rossella Savarese, “Emergenza, crisi e disastro: come comunicare”, in *Comunicazione e crisi: media, conflitti e società*, ed. by Rossella Savarese, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2002, pp. 15-33.

correspondents resident in Italy to keep them informed about what had happened in order to identify the causes of an event of such magnitude.¹⁷ Even outside eminent learned circles of this kind, many people wondered about the cause of the disaster. Pietro Mataplana, canon of the Cathedral of Palermo, inserted a short report on the damage caused by the 1693 earthquake at the end of the *Vita e miracoli di santa Rosalia vergine palermitana* by the Franciscan Juan de San Bernardo. In it, he attributed the quake to the presence of fiery cavities underneath Etna, thus identifying a natural origin for the disaster and coming out on the side of what were known as the “fire” theories, which held that subterranean fires were responsible for the shaking of the earth. Such theories were already widespread at the time and then became central, along with the “electricity” theories, in the debate that developed after the major 18th-century earthquakes in Lisbon (1755) and Sicily-Calabria (1783). At the same time, however, Mataplana emphasised that this was only a partial explanation, further clarifying that the primary cause of the earthquake was a sign of the manifestation of divine wrath visited upon society as punishment for its sins.¹⁸

In effect, in the numerous accounts composed in the wake of the disaster, the religious interpretation was decidedly predominant. On the other hand, the scale of the event was so vast as to convince the Sicilian population that the apocalypse was truly at hand.¹⁹ The recourse to the sacred, with its power of aggregation, became a crucial prerequisite for the restoration of order. In the aftermath of the earthquake, in the towns of the Val di Noto that had been struck, processions were duly organised in honour of the patron saints who had already proved their heroism in tackling such natural phenomena. In Catania, for instance, the people put their trust in their patron, St Agatha of Sicily, as they had done at the time

17. Condorelli, “Le tremblement de terre”, pp. 159-161.

18. Juan De San Bernardo, *Vita, e miracoli di Santa Rosalia vergine palermitana. Del P.M. FR. Giovanni da S. Bernardo, Lettor Giubilato, Qualificatore del S. Ufficio, Essaminatore Sinodale dell'Arcivescovo di Siviglia, & c. del Terz'Ordine di S. Francesco. Portata dal Castigliano all'Italiano da Pietro Mataplana, Canonico della Santa, Primaria, Metropolitana Chiesa della Città di Palermo: con aggiuntavi al fine una sommaria relazione de' danni cagionati da Terremoti in Sicilia; E dedicata all'Illustrissimo Senato*, Palermo, Agostino Epiro, 1693, pp. 236-240.

19. Salvatore Nicolosi, *Apocalisse in Sicilia. Il terremoto del 1693*, Catania, Tringale, 1982.

of the earthquake of 1542 and the catastrophic eruption of Etna in 1669.²⁰ However, in this case, the almost complete destruction of the city led the local authorities to extend the range of invocations, drawing on the entire, variegated heritage of relics conserved in the city cathedral.²¹

Reactions were similar in other parts of the Kingdom of Sicily, where the effects of the quake were less dramatic than in the eastern part of the island. In Palermo, the most significant damage was to several buildings, including the Palazzo Reale and the church of San Niccolò da Tolentino, although there were no victims. The fact that the capital of the kingdom had been saved from a greater disaster led the inhabitants to believe that they had been spared by God through the intercession of St Rosalia. Indeed, during the earthquake, the Palermo virgin had given proof of a capacity for divine intercession superior to that of St Agatha, whose origins had been the subject of a lengthy dispute with the capital over the course of the 17th century.²² According to Antonio Mongitore, canon of the cathedral chapter of Palermo and one of the most prominent Sicilian intellectuals of the time, the saving of human life despite the collapse of buildings in the busiest streets of the city centre was a clear sign of Rosalia's providential intervention.²³

2. *Disasters, saints and institutions*

2.1. *The establishment of the patronage of St Rosalia in Palermo during the plague of 1624*

There was nothing incidental about the recourse to St Rosalia in the face of events that at the time were considered *flagellum Dei*. The hermit saint had been credited with having put an end to the terrible outbreak

20. Cabibbo, *Il paradiso del magnifico regno*, p. 93; Lina Scalisi, *Per riparar l'incendio. Le politiche d'emergenza dal Perù al Mediterraneo. Huaynaputina 1600 - Vesuvio 1631 - Etna 1669*, Catania, San Filippo Editore, 2013, pp. 62-94.

21. Cabibbo, *Il paradiso del magnifico regno*, pp. 93-94.

22. Lina Scalisi, "Un mito conteso. Il culto di Sant'Agata tra Catania e Palermo nel Seicento", in *Uso e reinvenzione dell'antico nella politica di età moderna (secc. XVI-XIX)*, ed. by Francesco Benigno and Nicoletta Bazzano, Bari-Rome, Lacaita, 2006, pp. 147-167.

23. *Diari della città di Palermo dal secolo XVI al XIX*, vol. VII, ed. by Gioacchino Di Marzo, Palermo, Pedone Lauriel, 1871, pp. 100-102.

of plague that had struck Sicily, and Palermo in particular, in 1624. As is known, initially the people of Palermo appealed to the ancient protectors of the city, especially St Ninfa and St Cristina and to St Roch and St Sebastian²⁴ – traditionally seen as deliverers from pestilence in Catholic Europe – who had similarly been invoked during the earlier plague of 1575. But later they turned to imploring the intercession of St Rosalia, who was something of a new entry in the city's rituals. Although the tradition of her cult was ancient, it was essentially connected with Monte Pellegrino, the mountain rising behind Palermo where Rosalia had lived in a cave as a hermit.²⁵

The remains of the saint were discovered on 15 July 1624, after which they were analysed by a committee of physicians and theologians. When the relics were identified as belonging to Rosalia in February of the following year, it triggered a major increase in devotion. Her miraculous intervention against the epidemic was recognised, and the city authorities proclaimed her patron saint of Palermo in a significant reconfiguration of the consolidated and traditional local patronage.

At the same time, an equally decisive role in bringing the pestilence to an end was attributed to the Virgin Mary. Whereas in previous calamities she had been invoked alongside other protector saints, in the new emergency context, the cult was institutionalised. The municipal authority proclaimed her patron of the city of Palermo, undertaking to contribute the sum of 100 *onze* for the celebration of her feast to be held on 8 December of every year. It simultaneously pronounced a "blood oath", a solemn vow to defend the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception at the cost of one's life.²⁶ In the course of the 17th century, similar devotional manifestations towards the Mother of God also emerged in other parts of Sicily. In 1640, Mario Graffeo, Prince of Partanna and Duke of Ciminna, sponsored the cult of the Virgin Mary, electing her as the prime protector and authorising the construction of a gilded statue to be displayed

24. Mario Sensi, "Santuari, culti e riti *ad repellendam pestem* tra medioevo ed età moderna", in *Luoghi sacri e spazi della santità*, ed. by Sofia Boesch Gajano and Lucetta Scaraffia, Turin, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1990, pp. 135-144: 135-137.

25. Petrarca, *Genesi di una tradizione*, pp. 19-24.

26. Francesco Lo Piccolo, "Veicoli di diffusione del culto e consumo della devozione dell'Immacolata nel Palermitano (secoli XVI-XVIII)", in *La Sicilia e l'Immacolata. Non solo 150 anni*, ed. by Diego Ciccarelli and Marisa Dora Valenza, Palermo, Biblioteca Francescana, 2006, pp. 279-290: 281-282.

during the processions.²⁷ The Kingdom of Sicily was not alone in its development of a particular devotion to the Virgin Mary. This fitted into a larger process that had begun in Spain, and more specifically in Seville, around ten years earlier as a consequence of the complex doctrinal issue concerning the nature of the Virgin that was greatly debated at the time.²⁸ In his desire to endow the Hispanic Monarchy with a sacred character, Philip III had become the advocate of an intensive devotion towards Our Lady and support for the dogma of the Immaculate Conception.²⁹ Although Philip did not have the approval of the Church of Rome, he was sustained in his intent by a propaganda campaign launched by the Franciscans and championed even more assiduously by the Jesuits.

The process that led to the establishment of the patronage of St Rosalia was also fundamental for the creation of a sacred urban identity. There were several reasons for this, as emphasised in recent studies on the emergence of the saint's cult, in particular those of Sara Cabibbo and Valerio Petrarca. While on the one hand it was the "inefficacy" of the saints initially invoked that drove the citizens to entrust their salvation to a different figure, on the other hand there were also other dynamics at work within the Palermo context that contributed to the redefinition of the celestial hierarchy.³⁰

The discovery of the relics was greeted most favourably by Cardinal Giannettino Doria, Archbishop of Palermo from 1608 and, at the time, acting viceroy of the kingdom in the transitional period following the sudden death of Viceroy Emanuele Filiberto of Savoy from the plague.³¹ The crisis that had struck the capital of the kingdom, and the increased popular fervour towards Rosalia, was strategically exploited by Archbishop Doria to foster the cult and carve out a leading role in it for himself. With the

27. Arturo Anzelmo, "Del culto dell'Immacolata Concezione di M.V. a Ciminna", in *La Sicilia e l'Immacolata*, pp. 23-40: 24-27.

28. Paolo Broggio, "Immacolata Concezione", *Bruniana & Campanelliana*, 17 (2011), pp. 233-244.

29. Adriano Prosperi, "L'immacolata a Siviglia e la fondazione della Monarchia spagnola", *Studi Storici*, 47/2 (2006), pp. 481-510.

30. Sara Cabibbo, *Santa Rosalia tra terra e cielo. Storia, rituali, linguaggi di culto*, Palermo, Sellerio, 2004; Petrarca, *Genesi di una tradizione*.

31. Fabrizio D'Avenia, "'Español como si naciera allá'. Giannettino Doria, cardinale della fazione spagnola (1604-1642)", in *La iglesia en palacio. Los eclesiásticos en las cortes hispánicas (siglos XVI-XVII)*, ed. by Rafael Valladares, Rome, Viella, 2019, pp. 93-110.

official recognition of the saint and her inscription in the *Martyrologium Romanum*, authorised by Pope Urban VIII in 1630, he was able to boast that he had provided the capital with a saint who, unlike the others, had been born and died in Palermo.³²

The Jesuits, ever attentive in monitoring the development and spread of the cults sponsored by the Church of Rome, were also decisive in the promotion and consolidation of the devotion to St Rosalia. In the years immediately following the introduction of the new patronage, they engaged actively in the reconstruction of the genealogy of the saint, becoming her principal hagiographers, along with the Oratorians.³³ The investigations into the origins of the new patron saint of the city were entrusted to Giordano Cascini, a close associate of Archbishop Doria. The work produced by the Jesuit father was published in 1627 as the *Vita S. Rosaliae virginis panormitanae*, with the intent of providing the Palermitan virgin-hermit with a status worthy of the capital of a kingdom. In welding the origins of Rosalia to the urban reality, the Jesuits endowed the city with a sacred identity, at the same time strengthening their bonds with the principal local institutions.³⁴

Finally, to fulfil their mission of educating and instructing the people, the Jesuits also turned their attention to the iconography of the saint. They commissioned a painting of Rosalia from the Flemish painter Anthony van Dyck, who had previously come to Palermo to paint a portrait of the viceroy Emanuele Filiberto. This painting, together with the hagiographic literature, served to stabilise the cult while also fixing the image of the new patron saint of Palermo in the collective memory.³⁵

32. Cabibbo, *Santa Rosalia tra terra e cielo*, pp. 56-68.

33. Simon Ditchfield, "Sanctity in Early Modern Italy", *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 47/1 (1996), pp. 98-112; Sabina Pavone, *I gesuiti dalle origini alla soppressione. 1540-1773*, Bari-Rome, Laterza, 2009.

34. Raffaele Manduca, *Le chiese, lo spazio, gli uomini. Istituzioni ecclesiastiche e clero nella Sicilia moderna*, Caltanissetta-Rome, Sciascia Editore, 2009.

35. Fiorenza Rangoni, "Anton van Dyck a Palermo, i Gesuiti e Santa Rosalia", in *A la luz de Roma, Santos y santidad en el barroco iberoamericano*, ed. by Fernando Quiles García, José Jaime García Bernal, Paolo Broglio and Marcello Fagiolo Dell'Arco, 3 vols, vol. I, Seville-Rome, Universidad Pablo de Olavide-Roma Tre-Press, 2020, pp. 247-264.

2.2. *Repurposing cults and establishing new patrons: St Rosalia and St Francis Borja*

In the years following the introduction of the patronage of St Rosalia, her cult continued to be associated with epidemics. However, the earthquake of 1693 provided the opportunity to extend her powers of intercession to natural disasters. In fact, in the months after the catastrophe, there was a flurry of publications and *relazioni* acknowledging and extolling the “heroic deeds” of the saint in counteracting the recent disaster. Alessandro Burgos composed an ode titled *Palermo ossequiosa a piè di S. Rosalia sua cittadina e protettrice per averla liberata dalle comuni rovine caggionate in Sicilia da’ tremuoti*.³⁶ Pietro Mataplana, too, in the report mentioned above, attributed the sparing of the capital of the kingdom and the saving of human lives to the patron saint.³⁷

In order to provide historic grounds for this new attribution of divine powers, investigations into the past were made in search of events that could certify the protection against movements of the earth. In the *Historia cronologica delli signori viceré di Sicilia*, published in Palermo in 1697, Vincenzo Auria recorded that several years before the discovery of the remains of Rosalia, a devout woman from Palermo was taken by surprise by an earthquake while engaged in seeking the body of the saint on Monte Pellegrino. The woman’s testimony made it possible to endow Rosalia with miraculous virtues against earthquakes, which she had then been able to display when her birthplace was struck by the seismic event.³⁸

As with the plague of 1624, at the time of the 1693 earthquake the Jesuits again played a crucial role, not only in strengthening the cult of the patron but also in the construction of a new sacred memory. In 1694, Father Ignazio del Vio published the chronicle *Li giorni d’oro di Palermo nella trionfale solennità di S. Rosalia vergine palermitana* containing a description of the annual ceremony celebrated in honour of the saint

36. Alessandro Burgos, *Palermo ossequiosa a piè di S. Rosalia sua cittadina e protettrice per averla liberata dalle comuni rovine caggionate in Sicilia da’ tremuoti*, Palermo, Agostino Epiro, 1693.

37. De San Bernardo, *Vita, e miracoli*, pp. 271-273.

38. Vincenzo Auria, *Historia cronologica delli signori viceré di Sicilia dal tempo che mancò la personale assistenza de’ Serenissimi Re di quella. Cioè dall’Anno 1409 fino al 1697 presente [...]*, Palermo, Pietro Coppola, 1697, pp. 198-199.

on 15 July, corresponding to the date of the discovery of her body. This composition was an authentic repurposing of Rosalia's role. In singing the praises of the patron saint, the author endowed her with the title of "ruler of the elements", assigning her the merit for having saved Palermo from various disasters that had befallen the city after 1624. These included another plague that threatened the city in 1649, a flood in 1666 and finally the terrible earthquake of 1693.³⁹

The civil and religious authorities were also fundamental in the renewed promotion of the cult of St Rosalia. A few days after the earthquake, Archbishop Fernando Bazán y Manrique celebrated a votive mass of thanks in honour of the saint, also announcing that for the entire month of January solemn functions would be celebrated, to be attended by all the people of Palermo. Already on the day after the quake, the archbishop had clearly displayed his devotion to the patron saint, making several pilgrimages to Monte Pellegrino as a token of gratitude for the benefits received.⁴⁰ The archbishop's special devotion to Rosalia may very likely have been due to the fact that, despite being a Spanish nobleman, he had actually been born in Palermo in 1627 – at the very height of the popular religious fervour that invaded the capital after the plague epidemic – and had lived in the city during the time when the hagiographic literature on the saint flourished.⁴¹

However, the most outstanding advocate of the official repurposing of Rosalia – from plague to earthquakes – was the Senate of the city. This body evidently grasped the advantage of encouraging the "new" miraculous nature of the saint so as to inextricably bind its own role as the principal municipal authority to the cult of the patron. A few weeks after the earthquake, the Senate announced a thanksgiving procession for the following month to pay homage to Rosalia for the graces received. At the same time, it established that the procession would be repeated on 11 January every year on the anniversary of the disaster as a sign of perpetual memory.⁴² As another gesture of appreciation, the Senate also

39. Ignazio Del Vio, *Li giorni d'oro di Palermo nella trionfale solennità di S. Rosalia vergine palermitana celebrata l'anno 1693. Rinovandosi l'annuale memoria della sua invenzione*, Palermo, Pietro Coppola, 1694, p. 93.

40. *Diari della città di Palermo*, pp. 108-110.

41. Rocco Pirri, *Sicilia sacra. Disquisitionibus, et notitiis illustrata*, vol. I, Sala Bolognese, Arnaldo Forni Editore, 1987, pp. 258-266.

42. Archivio Storico Comunale di Palermo, *Bandi*, vol. 502.80, ff. 198v-200r.

decided to institute lavish celebrations for the patron saint, extending the traditional annual festivities from three to four days, culminating on 15 July and described in detail in the chronicle of Del Vio.⁴³

The protection of Palermo from the effects of the earthquake was also functional to fostering a new anti-seismic cult in the city, particularly for the Jesuits. As emerges from Del Vio's chronicle, the patron saint of Palermo had not been alone during the earthquake but had been accompanied by St Francis Borja, a descendent of Pope Alexander VI, fourth Duke of Gandía and later third Superior General of the Society of Jesus.⁴⁴ Moreover, the cult of the saint-duke was not new within the cultural context of Palermo. It had been sponsored by the Jesuits over the course of the 17th century, and especially in 1671, the year of Borja's canonisation. As in other territories of the Hispanic Monarchy, on this occasion the devotion to the Spanish saint was introduced by a solemn procession that was described in detail in a report published several months later.⁴⁵ In the same year, the Jesuits also commissioned the architect Mariano Quaranta and the sculptor Giovanni Travaglia to build a chapel in his honour in the Chiesa del Gesù as a further endorsement of his link with the capital of the kingdom.

The earthquake of 1693 not only consolidated devotion to St Francis Borja, but also assigned him the title of patron saint of Palermo. His installation among the local sainthood was favoured by his proven miracle-working against earthquakes, known for several decades within the territories of the Hispanic Monarchy, and especially in the colonies where he had been instrumental in founding several Jesuit missions. The origins of the saint's protection against earthquakes dates to 1627, when a violent tremor struck the city of Santa Fé de Bogotá in the Nuevo Reino de Granada (now Colombia). Following this event, as described in the *Relacion de los patronatos que tiene San Francisco de Borja en varios reynos*, the local authorities – and the archbishop in particular – acknowledged the safeguarding action of the saint and duly proclaimed him a protector against earthquakes.⁴⁶

43. Rosalia Francesca Margiotta, *Una galassia seminata di stelle. Il festino di santa Rosalia in una cronaca del 1693*, Palermo, Palermo University Press, 2018.

44. Santiago La Parra López, "Francisco de Borja y Gandía: la formación del cortesano", *Revista de l'Institut Internacional d'Estudis Borgians*, 4 (2012), pp. 83-105.

45. *Narratione delle feste fatte in Palermo, per la Canonizzazione di S. Francesco Borgia*, Palermo, Pietro Camagna, 1672.

46. Guidoboni-Poirier, *Storia culturale del terremoto*, pp. 143-144.

Later, Borja's special protection was once again displayed in the Kingdom of Naples when the area of Samnium was struck by a terrible earthquake in 1688, which also caused serious damage in the capital. As has been stressed in the studies by Ida Mauro on the spread of the cult of St Francis Borja in Naples, the principal promoter on this occasion was the viceroy, Francisco de Benavides Dávila y Corella, Count of Santisteban, with the even more fervent support of his wife Francisca Josefa de Aragón y Sandoval, who was directly descended from the Borja family on her mother's side.⁴⁷ However, despite the efforts of the viceroy and his wife, Borja did not obtain the desired title of patron saint of Naples, at least not on that occasion. The protection from the earthquake was instead attributed to St Filippo Neri, obviously with the backing of the Oratorians and in particular that of Vincenzo Maria Orsini, Archbishop of Benevento and future Pope Benedict XIII (1724-1730). The cardinal had indeed emerged miraculously from the rubble, thanks to the protection of the images of the saint, as he himself testified in his famous account of the incident.⁴⁸

Similar dynamics to those of Naples were also at work in Palermo, where the promotion of the cult of Borja took place through the impetus of the viceroy. Here, again, a woman figured as a more active party than her consort in fostering spiritual actions within the devotional arena.⁴⁹ Like the Viceroy of Naples, the Viceroy of Sicily, Juan Francisco Pacheco Téllez-Girón, Duke of Uzeda, had married a Sandoval, Isabel María de Sandoval y Girón, she too a member of the Borja lineage.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Sandoval family had also played a crucial part in the process of beatification of Francis Borja, initiated at the request of the Duke of Lerma, Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas in 1611 and concluded in 1624 during the pontificate of Urban VIII.⁵¹

47. Ida Mauro, "La diffusione del culto di san Francesco Borgia a Napoli tra feste pubbliche e orgoglio nobiliare", *Revista Borja. Revista de l'Institut Internacional d'Estudis Borgians*, 4 (2012), pp. 549-560.

48. Monica Azzolini, "Coping with Catastrophe: St Filippo Neri as Patron Saints of Earthquakes", *Quaderni storici*, 52/3 (2017), pp. 727-750.

49. *Domestic Devotions in Early Modern World*, ed. by Marco Faini and Alessia Meneghin, Leiden, Brill, 2018.

50. See <https://www.elsborja.cat/els-borja/arbres-genealogics/>.

51. Henar Pizarro Llorente, "De duque de Gandía a santo: la transformación de San Francisco de Borja a través de sus biografía", *Chronica Nova. Revista de Historia Moderna de la Universidad de Granada*, 43 (2017), pp. 53-84: 58-64.

In the dramatic situation brought about by the earthquake, the bond with the Spanish saint on his wife's side was a strategic trump card for the viceroy. Not only could it boost his political prestige but, even more importantly, it could help to ward off any antagonism from the citizens of Palermo that might have been accentuated by a situation of crisis. The fact was that – especially after his confirmation for a second three-year term – the viceroy's government had aroused widespread discontent among the people due to the oppressive taxes levied to swell the royal coffers.⁵² In actual fact, in the by now declining realm of the last of the Habsburgs, intolerance towards the Spanish nobles had never been so far-reaching, and on many occasions they were accused of being the main culprits for the natural disasters.⁵³ As a result, Charles II was undoubtedly concerned about a hypothetical political interpretation of the Sicilian catastrophe, which at the international level would also give rival powers the chance to discredit the feared Hispanic Monarchy. France, in particular, had immediately taken advantage of the disaster that had just struck Sicily to circulate the notion that the earthquake was sent by God to punish the Spanish Crown, guilty among other things of having allied with Protestant countries.⁵⁴

This was very likely the context that spurred the viceroy to establish the recognition in the city of St Francis Borja “como especial abogado de los terremotos”.⁵⁵ In addition, to secure a strong and lasting devotion in Palermo, in October 1693 he begged the king to ensure that future viceroys too would recognise the patronage of the saint through the annual celebration of a public function in his chapel.⁵⁶ The official seal of approval for Borja's patronage was not long in coming. On 16 December, praising the work of the viceroy in having promoted the new devotion in the Kingdom of Sicily, the king established a permanent feast “en veneración de un santo tan grande español”.⁵⁷

52. Giovanni Evangelista De Blasi, *Storia cronologica dei vicerè, luogotenenti e presidenti del Regno di Sicilia. Seguita da un'appendice sino al 1842*, Palermo, Stamperia Orteza, 1842, p. 433.

53. Domenico Cecere, “*Subterranea conspiración*. Terremoti, comunicazione e politica nella monarchia di Carlo II”, *Studi Storici*, 4 (2019), pp. 811-843.

54. Condorelli, “Le tremblement de terre”, pp. 157-158.

55. Archivio di Stato di Palermo, *Real Segreteria, Incartamenti*, vol. 2457, f. nn. Viceroy Uzeda to King Charles II (15 October 1693).

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*, f. nn. Charles II to Viceroy Uzeda (16 December 1693).

3. Conclusion

In the decades that followed the 1693 earthquake, in the city of Palermo, the popularity of the cults of the heroic saints Rosalia and Francis Borja did not proceed in parallel. Despite the efforts and requests of Viceroy Uzeda, the devotion towards the Spanish saint did not achieve the desired results. In the city chronicles, there are no references to the annual celebrations that had been introduced at the end of 1693, nor was his protection invoked when the city was threatened with new calamities. The situation was different in other parts of the Kingdom of Sicily where Borja had been proclaimed patron. In Caltagirone, which had been badly damaged by the earthquake, the fact that the Chiesa del Gesù did not collapse gave the members of the order a reason to encourage devotion to Borja. The same happened in Catania, and, during the reconstruction of the city, the Jesuits launched the construction of the present Collegio, not incidentally right next to the church of San Francesco Borgia.⁵⁸

In Palermo, the cult of St Rosalia continued to be strong. At the beginning of the 18th century, accounts were still being published that acknowledged her power of intercession against plagues and earthquakes.⁵⁹ It was to her once again – and her alone – that the citizens entrusted their hopes when another and much more powerful earthquake struck the capital in 1726. As with the 1693 disaster, on this occasion, too, the civic authorities – and in particular the archbishop, José Gasch – established annual celebrations to perpetuate her memory, in addition to the traditional processions of a devotional nature.

Today, although devotion to St Rosalia is still felt very deeply in Palermo, it is no longer associated with disasters linked to natural events. Every year on 15 July, after the traditional civic feast on the previous day, the city commemorates the end of the plague of 1624 and displays its gratitude through the veneration of the holy relics carried in procession through the streets of the old city centre. There is no trace of celebrations connected with the saint's role as a protector against natural calamities. Nevertheless, the cult of the virgin hermit's protection against earthquakes does appear to have persisted at least up to the first half of the 19th century.

58. Cabibbo, *Il paradiso del magnifico regno*, pp. 95-100.

59. Pietro Mataplana, *Novena in onor della Santa, protettrice contra la peste e i tremuoti*, Palermo, Domenico Cortese, 1708.

The liturgical calendar for the year 1858 – contained in the monumental educational guide to the city composed by Gaspare Palermo – lists special masses and processions in recollection of the earthquakes of 1693 and 1726.⁶⁰ It seems likely that the political changes that took place following the annexing of Sicily to the Kingdom of Italy, and above all the popular revolts of 1866 against the new government – which, among other things, did not encourage religious manifestations – put an end to this tradition, albeit without impairing the original cult of the patron saint.⁶¹

60. Gaspare Palermo, *Guida istruttiva per Palermo e suoi dintorni riprodotta su quella del cav. D. Gaspare Palermo dal beneficiale Girolamo Di Marzo-Ferro, Regio Cappellano curato dei reali Veterani*, Palermo, Pietro Pensante, 1858, pp. 19-43.

61. Orazio Cancila, *Palermo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2009; Ewelina Walendziak-Genco, “Festa Patronale di Santa Rosalia di Palermo: storia e folklore”, *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, 60/2 (2013), pp. 239-255.

MARCO PAPASIDERO

“In segno della ricevuta gratia”: St Angelus, Protector of Licata from Plague, Storms and Natural Catastrophes*

The cult of St Angelus in Licata dates back to at least the late Middle Ages. The oldest *Life* of the saint is that of the so-called “Enoch”, which already circulated around the mid-15th century.¹ The story tells that Angelus was born into a family of Jews who had converted to Christianity. When his parents died, he and his brother John entered the convent on Mount Carmel, in Palestine. In 1218, he was in Rome to submit the new rule of the order to Pope Honorius III, where – according to a tradition that is not historically reliable – he met the founders of the two great mendicant orders, Francis and Dominic. The inclusion of this episode is clearly intended to give a certain authority to the Carmelites as a new mendicant order on par with the Franciscans and the Order of Preachers. From Rome, Angelus then went to Sicily where he preached in various cities including Palermo and Agrigento. Again according to the hagiographic account, when Angelus reached Licata, he met the man who was to kill him shortly afterwards. Berengario della Pulcella was a local lord who had an incestuous relationship with his sister Margherita. Margherita became a convert but Berengario did not, and he killed Angelus on 5 May 1220 while he was preaching at the church of Santi Filippo e Giacomo.² Although only some of the episodes in Angelus’s hagiography bear up to historical

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1. Ludovico Saggi, *S. Angelo di Sicilia. Studio sulla vita, devozione, folklore*, Rome, Institutum Carmelitanum, 1962, pp. 150-225.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 212, 214, 216, 218, 220.

scrutiny, the cult that must have developed in Licata after his death is much more solidly grounded.

The cult of St Angelus spread in Licata and in the Carmelite convents from at least the middle of the 15th century. Like one of the other ancient Carmelite saints, Alberto degli Abbati, or da Trapani, Angelus just received the approval of his cult from the pope, without a formal canonisation.³ On 27 September 1457, Callixtus III issued a bull – which was actually published by Sixtus IV on 31 May 1476 – giving permission to annex the chapel of the saint to the Carmelite convent in Licata, although this did not take place until 1605.⁴ The papal bull came just a few months after the provincial chapter of Sicily, held in Licata on 8 May of the same year, during which it was established that the feast of St Angelus would be celebrated every year and that his image would be painted. Also dating to the second half of the 15th century are the other references to Angelus in the Carmelite Breviary (*Breviarium Carmelitarum*, Cl, II, 215, Ferrara municipal library), the Carmelite Missal (first incunable printed on 14 August 1490 in Brescia) and in various martyrologies, even composed in the following decades, through to the *Roman Martyrology* of 1583.

So, the martyrdom of St Angelus and the conservation of his relics at Licata gave rise to both a new cult and a new patronage. The previous protectors of the city were the patron saints of the 12th-century church where Angelus had been martyred, dedicated like many others in Sicily to the apostles Philip and James the Less. What is now the sanctuary of St Angelus was built from 1564 on to replace the smaller, earlier church, and it, in turn, was replaced starting in 1626 by another, larger building to accommodate the numerous pilgrims and as a result of the vow the city made to the saint for deliverance from the plague.

Evidence of the cult of St Angelus in Licata is modest up to the late 16th and early 17th century. One of the key events was the translation of the relics from the original silver urn in which they had been preserved since 1486 to a much more elaborate silver urn made by the Modica

3. Ludovico Saggi, “Alberto degli Abati, santo”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. I, 1960 [consulted online: [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alberto-degli-abati-santo_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/alberto-degli-abati-santo_(Dizionario-Biografico))]; Ludovico Saggi, “Alberto degli Abati, da Trapani”, in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, vol. I, 1961, pp. 676-680; Filippo Burgarella, “Profilo storico-biografico di Sant’Alberto degli Abbati nella Sicilia del suo tempo”, *Carmelus*, 53 (2006), pp. 131-156.

4. Ludovico Saggi, “Angelo di Sicilia, santo”, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. III, 1961 [consulted online: [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/angelo-di-sicilia-santo_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/angelo-di-sicilia-santo_(Dizionario-Biografico))]; Saggi, *S. Angelo di Sicilia*, p. 227.

silversmith Lucio de Arizi. The relics are still conserved in this urn, which was recently restored. The translation took place on the 5 May 1623⁵ – the commemoration of the saint’s death – and an inquiry on his miracles was also launched to gather evidence connected with devotion to the saint from the citizens of Licata and the surrounding areas who could relate the benefits they, or their family and friends, had received. The original documents of this inquiry were drafted between 1625 and 1627 by the notary Giacomo Murci and are no longer available.

Currently, we have two exemplars of the work.⁶ The first, dating to 1640, is an authenticated copy made by the notary himself based on the original deeds to be sent to the Prior General of the Carmelite Order, Teodoro Straccio, and now conserved in the Archivum Generale Ordinis Carmelitarum in Rome. It occupies the entire codex and consists of 156 pages. The exemplar is complete, without any damaged or missing parts, and consists of: the frontispiece (1r); an illustration showing St Angelus and the city of Licata (2r); an index of the documents and the witness testimonies (3r-4v); documents (5r-8v); testimonies (9r-153v); notes and the notary’s concluding remarks (153v-155v); and an illustration showing the silver urn of the saint (156r). The second exemplar is conserved in the library of Cagliari University (Manoscritti, ms. 216). It is contained in a paper manuscript and is an authenticated copy written in 1627 by the notary Francesco Attardo. It is composed of 160 pages, missing those from page 2 to 7. It is substantially the same as the copy already mentioned, apart from some graphic variations and the absence of the index and a few of the first documents that were on the missing pages. It consists of: a frontispiece (1r); documents (8rv); testimonies (9r-158v), notes and the notary’s concluding remarks (158v-159r); and an illustration of the previous urn (138r).⁷

5. Saggi, *S. Angelo di Sicilia*, pp. 282-286.

6. The two copies of the work are the following: *Miracula et beneficia misericordia Domini intercedente Sancto Angelo virgine et martyre, sacerdote carmelita Ierusalemitano, protectore civitatis dilectissimae Leocatae hac in curia spiritali solemnii testificatione descripta*, authenticated copy (1640) by the notary Giacomo Murci, Rome, Archivum Generale Ordinis Carmelitarum (henceforth AGOC), Post. III 2; and *Miracula et beneficia misericordia Domini intercedente Sancto Angelo virgine et martyre, sacerdote carmelita Ierusalemitano, protectore civitatis dilectissimae Leocatae hac in curia spiritali solemnii testificatione descripta*, authenticated copy (1627) by the notary Francesco Attardo, Cagliari, Biblioteca Universitaria, Manoscritti, ms. 216.

7. Since the edition is currently being prepared and cannot be referenced, quotations will be taken from the manuscript in AGOC (henceforth *Miracula et beneficia*).

There are 113 testimonies, 92 made by men and 21 by women (18.5%). A significant number of witnesses are educated, know how to write or have specific titles (doctor, physician, etc.), and 19 of them are religious (8 secular clergy, 8 friars, 1 nun and 2 clerics), while all the others are laypeople. Some episodes are recounted by many witnesses; others by just a few or only one. This information – especially that relating to the people involved – can be compared with that from other canonisation processes carried out in Sicily around the same time. The case of the canonisation of Benedetto da San Fratello, known as Benedict the Moor,⁸ which has been studied by Giovanna Fiume and Marilena Modica, is particularly relevant. Thirty-three women and 64 men⁹ took part in the ordinary inquiry of the process in 1594, whereas in that carried out in Palermo in 1620, women represented only 28% of the total.¹⁰ Even more significant was the inquiry carried out in San Fratello in the same year, when 52.2% of the testimonies were supplied by women.¹¹

Another useful comparison is with the two *in partibus* inquiries held in Randazzo, respectively in 1533 and 1573, to gather evidence of the life, virtues and miracles of the Blessed Luigi Rabatà. In the first inquiry, four of the 11 witnesses were women (36.3%), but in the second only two out of 12 (16.6%).¹² The Licata case therefore appears to be in line with other Sicilian examples in terms of a fairly low number of female witnesses – dramatically lower than the exceptional 1620 case of Saint Benedict in San Fratello – although the testimonies are frequently related to specifically female issues (difficult childbirth, care of children, etc.).

The documents of the inquiry are a mine of information on devotion to the saint, and also on the cultural and political history of Sicily at the turn

8. See *San Benedetto il Moro: santità, agiografia e primi processi di canonizzazione*, ed. by Giovanna Fiume and Marilena Modica, Palermo, Assessorato alla Cultura, 1998; Giovanna Fiume, “La ‘via legale’ alla santità. I primi processi di beatificazione di Benedetto il Moro (1591-1626)”, *Quaderni Storici*, 34, 100/1 (1999), pp. 151-172.

9. Giovanna Fiume, *Il santo moro. I processi di canonizzazione di Benedetto da Palermo (1594-1807)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2002, p. 52.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

12. Marco Papasidero, “Il beato Luigi Rabatà: aspetti del culto e pratiche taumaturgiche”, in *Un territorio nella storia: il Valdemone ionico dal Medioevo all’età contemporanea, Atti del Convegno in memoria di Giuseppe Giarrizzo (Forza d’Agrò - Savoca, 6-7 May 2017)*, ed. by Antonio Baglio, Salvatore Bottari and Giuseppe Campagna, Rome, Aracne, 2019, pp. 197-208.

of the 16th century.¹³ One of the recurrent topics is the plague that struck various cities in Sicily in 1624,¹⁴ and Licata in 1625, just two years after the translation of the relics to the new urn. Judging by the testimonies, the epidemic did not cause a large number of victims in the city.

The notary Giacomo Murci clearly expounds the reasons for the launch of the process inquiry, with himself as notary: “per maggior memoria di tale glorioso miracolo et acciò li posterì restassero con maggior devotione appresso il loro protectore”, summoning “li presenti testimonii al numero di cento”.¹⁵ The objective of collecting the evidence was to set down in writing “quanto in decto tempo di peste soccesse, giaché molti, mediante l’intercessione di decto sancto, furo libberati et preservati dal decto male”,¹⁶ and other miracles through which various ailments were cured (hernias, gallstones, diseases of the eye, wounds, etc.) and dangers averted (accidents and attacks). It was also aimed at enshrining the memory of facts and episodes that would otherwise have been lost, especially “giaché li libri dove si notavano li miracoli del decto sancto erano per l’antichità consumati”.¹⁷ The start of the miracle inquiry process was therefore a historical and memorial operation, driven by spiritual requirements (memory of the saint’s protection) and historical and documentary exigencies (recording the events to prevent the memory of what had occurred from being lost).

The relaunching of the cult of St Angelus took place in a very precise context and period. On the one hand, there was the Counter-Reformation climate that evolved during the Council of Trent (1545-1563), which – also through the new religious orders – contributed to a reawakening of interest in the saints, as well as personal spirituality exemplified in the spread of the practice of the rosary, also mentioned several times in the *Miracula et benefitia*. On the other hand, there was the great devotional fervour of Sicily in the early modern age – first under Aragon dominion and later under Spanish – characterised by important cults. For instance, the Marian

13. See Davide Soares da Silva, *Le epidemie di peste (tra '500 e '600) e lo sviluppo della scritturalità in Sicilia*, MA thesis, Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, 2009.

14. Calogero Valenti, “Due episodi di peste in Sicilia, 1526 e 1624”, *Archivio storico siciliano*, 10 (1984), pp. 5-88.

15. *Miracula et benefitia*, f. 139v.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, f. 140r.

title of the *Virgen de Monserrat*, associated with a statue venerated in the namesake monastery of Barcelona, spread widely in southern Italy and elsewhere, as did numerous local cults that acquired new momentum at this time. An example of the latter is the very important cult of Santa Rosalia, who enjoyed a huge increase in devotion with the discovery of her relics on Monte Pellegrino above Palermo in 1624 and her being credited with having brought the plague of 1624 to an end.¹⁸ The cults travelled with great speed from one place to another, as demonstrated by the fact that St Angelus of Licata too was included in the pantheon of the patron saints of Palermo in 1626, a sign of trust in the efficacy of his protection against the plague.

1. *The plague in Licata*

Catastrophes represent one of the crucial occasions on which Christians have, over the centuries, made recourse to the protection of their patron saints.¹⁹ Plague in particular is possibly the evil most famously to be averted through divine intercession, normally through recourse to miraculous images and relics.²⁰

The plague of 1625 arrived in the city in June and died out in August, although the testimony suggests that there were still some cases of infection. According to the priest Orazio Contrera, the epidemic had entered Licata through a “figliolo popolano, il quale stava in un cortile nel

18. Sara Cabibbo, *Santa Rosalia tra terra e cielo*, Palermo, Sellerio, 2004.

19. On disaster narrations, see *Récits et représentations des catastrophes naturelles depuis l'Antiquité*, ed. by René Favier and Anne-Marie Granet-Abisset, Grenoble, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme-Alpes, 2005; *Pestes, incendies, naufrages. Écritures du désastre au dix-septième siècle*, ed. by Françoise Lavocat, Turnhout, Brepols, 2011; *Historical Disasters in Context: Science, Religion, and Politics*, ed. by Andrea Janku, Gerrit J. Schenk and Franz Mauelshagen, London-New York, Routledge, 2012; *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture*, ed. by Domenico Cecere, Chiara De Caprio, Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Pasquale Palmieri, Rome, Viella, 2018.

20. Sheila Barker, “Miraculous Images and the Plagues of Italy, c. 590-1656”, in *Saints, Miracles and the Image: Healing Saints and Miraculous Images in the Renaissance*, ed. by Sandra Cardarelli and Laura Fenelli, Turnhout, Brepols, 2017, pp. 29-52. On the plague in Sicily, see the treatise written by the chief physician Ingrassia relating to the Palermo epidemic of 1624-1626: Gianfilippo Ingrassia, *Informatione del pestifero et contagioso morbo* [1576], ed. by Alfredo Salerno, Aldo Gerbino, Maria Buscemi, Tania Salomone and Renato Malta, Palermo, Plumelia Edizioni, 2012.

quartiere chiamato di sancto Angelo”.²¹ The boy’s illness was kept secret and he had contacts at home with other people, so the infection spread. This first alleged case of the plague was then joined by another involving Tofano Bellavia and his wife and sister.²² The priest Giuseppe Perconti was asked to visit their home on several occasions to hear the confessions of the mother and sister who were suffering from a high fever that prevented them from going to church. This episode is mentioned by numerous witnesses and contributed to an even wider spread of the infection, especially because it took place at a very early stage before the disease had been identified or the respective safety measures – quarantine, barring of access to civic buildings – implemented. Here, I am not concerned with reconstructing the chain of transmission, the number of people who came into contact with the first victims, how the disease spread or how it was checked. I will instead focus on how the citizens of Licata addressed this potential catastrophe, emphasising the way they interpreted what was happening and felt that otherworldly aid was indispensable.

The evidence contained in the deeds of the inquiry shows that many of the witnesses and inhabitants of Licata were firmly convinced that the limited spread of the “male contagioso” was due to the direct intervention of St Angelus. These statements are well circumstantiated and derive from deductions based on what the citizens saw happening around them. The main sign of the saint’s intervention is identified in the fact that the infection began in several houses that were part of the confraternity or “company” of Sant’Angelo, in the district where his sanctuary was and is still located.²³ As stated by the first witness, Don Carlo Giliberto, archpriest of the church of Santi Filippo e Giacomo in Licata – later replaced by that dedicated to St Angelus, begun in 1626 and opened for worship in 1662 – and in many other testimonies, God sent the plague “prima d’ogn’altro nel quartero della chiesa d’esso santo et in un cortiglio [courtyard] di case della compagnia del decto sancto”.²⁴ The idea that Angelus was responsible for preserving much of the city of Licata from the plague is a constant in the witnesses’ narration

21. *Miracula et benefitia*, f. 66r.

22. *Ibid.*, ff. 13r-14r.

23. Calogero Carità, *La chiesa di Sant’Angelo e la festa di maggio a Licata*, Licata, La Vedetta, 2020. The first references to the confraternity date to 1 January 1575, when it was officially confirmed by the Bishop of Agrigento, Cesare Marullo. See Saggi, *S. Angelo di Sicilia*, p. 299.

24. *Miracula et benefitia*, f. 10r.

of the epidemic. Don Carlo also stresses that “per comune parere questo [the end of the epidemic] fu per l’intercessione del decto sancto”.²⁵

And while the people of Licata attribute the end of the pestilence to the saint’s intervention, the outbreak of the plague too has a supernatural origin. The agent behind the arrival of the epidemic is God himself, who, according to the witnesses, wished to inflict this scourge on the city:²⁶ “Per ultimo piasse a Dio nel prossimo mese di giugno mandare il decto morbo contagioso in questa città et quello attaccato quasi per tutta la città, suo borgo et campagna. Il decto santo tratenne la mano di Dio, giaché in un istante, scoperto, il male s’estinse”.²⁷

The saint therefore acquired the tutelary function – constantly evoked in the text – of preserving the city of Licata from danger and catastrophe, treating it with an attitude of absolute privilege. This confirms the idea that saints are the “invisible friends” of men, who can resort to them in time of need.²⁸ More specifically, Angelus shows himself ready to intercede with God, who is perceived as more remote. Indeed, the words of Don Carlo Giliberti evoke the image of a punitive God (“piasse a Dio [...] mandare il decto morbo contagioso”), whose otherwise catastrophic action is tempered by the intervention of the saint who “tratenne la mano di Dio”.

Even though just a few days after the first infections the physicians realised that they were dealing with plague and took measures to stem the spread – quarantine, the establishment of a *lazaretto*, checks and monitoring of symptoms – in the deeds of the inquiry, supernatural action appears to predominate over human.²⁹ For instance, the Carmelite Antonio Serravilla stresses that human action alone would not have sufficed to stop the spread of the disease, and that only the protection of St Angelus – who was regularly invoked by the citizens – was able to save Licata: “il decto

25. *Ibid.*

26. From the testimonies, we learn that the disease also affected Trapani and Palermo (witness Giulio Bennici, *Miracula et benefittia*, f. 11r.). For Modica, which was struck by plague two years later, see Raffaele Poidomani, *La peste a Modica nel 1626: monografia storica in base ad atti e documenti originali*, Ragusa, CAFLAC, 1966.

27. *Miracula et benefittia*, f. 10r.

28. Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981.

29. See Maria Silvana Pellizzeri, “Medici e appestati nella Sicilia del Cinquecento”, in *Malattie, terapie e istituzioni sanitarie in Sicilia*, ed. by Calogero Valenti, Palermo, Ciso, 1985, pp. 99-111.

male s'estinse poiché ingegno humano non haveria bastato estinguerlo, se non la protectione d'un tanto et tale protectore".³⁰

In actual fact, the “ingegno humano” does also come into the witnesses' accounts, especially when they are physicians. The surgeon Giovanni Battista D'Ognibeni frequently went to help the sick and treat them in the *lazaretto* or to diagnose their illness. Agostino Infrigola did the same, offering aid to the sick “spontaneamente per amor di Dio et servitio della patria”³¹ since he was “esperto nella cura di simili morbo”³² and practiced “nell'arte della cirugia, essendo stato da anni vintiocto incirco in Barbaria et nella città d'Algeri schiavo”,³³ as such areas were frequently struck by the plague. D'Ognibeni was also one of the first to identify the disease, and was summoned along with other physicians before the councillors of the city, informing them that “veramente essere decto morbo contagioso et vera peste”.³⁴ The public announcement that it was indeed the plague was made on 13 June 1625 which – as many of the witnesses, including the physician, recalled – was the feast of St Anthony of Padua. Judging by the physician's words, the medical opinion was that the prospects were not good: “essi medici furo di parere non si potesse remediare, et essere decta infermità irreparabile respecto alli tanti parti decto male s'havea attaccato et non senza gran rovina della città”.³⁵

In actual fact, starting from the day of its identification, the infection began to abate to the extent that “il decto male terminò infra giorni quindici”.³⁶ It is interesting that all the witnesses giving evidence in the inquiry, even the physicians, were agreed in considering what happened to be a miracle. What struck them most was the speed with which the epidemic was halted, without causing widespread illness. The priest Orazio Contrera took up a very clear stance, emphasising that the ending of the plague “non si deve né può attribuire né a remedii né ad ordine usato, ma alla sola intercessione del sancto apresso Dio, nostro Signore”.³⁷

30. *Miracula et benefitia*, f. 16v. Similar words are found in the testimony of Giuseppe de Ramundo (f. 34r).

31. *Ibid.*, f. 23v.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, f. 22v.

34. *Ibid.*, f. 21v.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, f. 66v.

Therefore, St Angelus's intervention on behalf of Licata is made up of two aspects: on the one hand, the *general* and providential defence of the city, resulting in a relatively small number of victims;³⁸ on the other, the *particular* assistance given to individual victims, many of whom testified that they had been miraculously cured through the saint's intervention via practices connected with recourse to the relics.

As also happened in other cities struck by the plague, in Licata the epidemic brought about a suspension of normal liturgical practices and religious life. The chaplains of the main church of the city suspended the administration of the sacraments for fear of spreading the disease and, sometimes, of being infected themselves.³⁹ However, so that the faithful would not be completely deprived of the sacraments, the priest Giulio Bennici – *vicario* of Licata and delegate of the Visitor General of the Diocese of Agrigento – exhorted the witness Don Angelo De Labiso to go to the home of a sick woman, Costanza Gaeta, to hear her confession. Later, after administering the sacrament of extreme unction, another that the chaplains refused to administer, Don Angelo contracted the disease. Nevertheless, the testimonies reveal that people were allowed to visit the church of the saint to collect the holy water. As the Carmelite priest Giovanni Antonino Marchi recounts, the people continued to request the water and, after having been cured of the plague – even though they had not previously admitted that they were infected for fear of being taken to the *lazaretto* – they also brought many *ex votos* to the church, including alms for masses, oil for the lamps and wax for the candles,⁴⁰ as well as votive pictures. Sadly, no trace of such pictures has been found, even in the inventory ordered to be drawn up in 1992 by the then rector Don Antonino Todaro.

2. *The previous plague of 1575*

Although most of the evidence relates to the plague of 1625, there are also some brief references to that which struck Licata in 1575. Only

38. “Senza la perdita di molti” declared Vito Guglielmotta: *ibid.*, f. 18r.

39. *Ibid.*, f. 14v. Giulia Calvi provides a fascinating overview of the social problems in the city connected with the plagues of the 17th century: Giulia Calvi, *Storie di un anno di Peste*, Milan, Bompiani, 1984.

40. *Miracula et beneficia*, f. 28r.

two witnesses mention what happened that year, both of an age such as to remember it in person. The archpriest Carlo Giliberto, who was 68 at the time of the testimony and under 20 in 1575, refers to it as the “old plague”,⁴¹ a severe epidemic that caused many deaths throughout the Kingdom of Sicily. However, he also confirms that, as in the recent plague, Licata had come off lightly in the earlier one too.

The statement made by the notary Antonino Strega at the age of 74 again confirms that, as in the later episode, at the time “per l’intercessione del decto sancto pochissimi si moriro con decto male et foro tanto minor numero che non tanti sogliono morire annualmente con infermità ordinarii in decta città”.⁴² In this case, too, the protection of the city was entrusted to the saint, who ensured a very low mortality rate, actually lower than that of other normal pathologies. But this was also due to the trust that the citizens placed in St Angelus, as they “recorrevano alla devotione del decto santo, lavandosi con decta acqua, quale li preservava dal decto male”.⁴³ This water was therefore one of the principal weapons in the fight against infection.

Although only mentioned briefly by two witnesses, the plague of 1575 nevertheless remained in the memory as a species of potentially catastrophic precedent that had affected numerous cities in the kingdom and that had been thwarted by the saint’s action. The evocation of this episode is undoubtedly a way of recording all the miracles performed by St Angelus that the witness recalls, and also a reminder of how he had already demonstrated the same benevolence towards his faithful. Such loyalty is one of the key motifs in the text: only by turning to the saint, invoking his intercession and remaining faithful to him is it possible to obtain the hoped-for assistance. Further, all the requests for intercession made to other saints – St Lucia, St Rosalia, St Roch and others – or to Our Lady (especially the Madonna of Trapani in the Carmelite sanctuary)⁴⁴ also included St Angelus in the invocation.

41. *Ibid.*, f. 9v.

42. *Ibid.*, f. 71v.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Gabriele Monaco, *La Madonna di Trapani: storia, culto, folklore*, Naples, Laurenziana, 1981; Vincenzo Scuderi, *La Madonna di Trapani e il suo Santuario: momenti, opere e culture artistiche*, Trapani, Edizioni del Santuario della Madonna di Trapani, 2011.

3. *Public and collective devotional and therapeutic practices*

While the evidence of the inhabitants of Licata attributes the cessation of the two plagues to the intervention of St Angelus, it should be remembered that such intervention was explicitly invoked and implored through private devotions and public liturgies. The public devotional practices involving the community, or performed by the Carmelite friars for the city, included the Forty Hours,⁴⁵ the exposition of the relics and the commitment to provide the faithful with holy water from the spring and oil from the lamp. The water, in particular, is one of the principal elements of devotion in Licata, since tradition holds that a spring flowed forth miraculously on the site of the saint's martyrdom.⁴⁶ Moreover, the use of miraculous waters was not new to the Carmelite cults in Sicily. The prototype was definitely that of Sant'Alberto of Trapani, which was prepared in various sites dedicated to the saint by immersing one of his relics in it.⁴⁷ Another case is that of the Blessed Luigi Rabatà in Randazzo, whose relics were used to prepare a "medicine" of a similar kind that the faithful would take in church to be cured of their illnesses.⁴⁸ Beyond the Carmelite cases, a similar practice is also recorded with the relics of St Placidus in Messina.⁴⁹ Sicily hence offered a number of therapeutic cults involving recourse to water and to the preparation of specific thaumaturgical beverages, among which Licata was particularly prominent.⁵⁰ The water from the miraculous

45. Costanzo Cargnoni, "Quarante-heures", in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, 12/2 (1986), pp. 2702-2723; Marina Caffiero, *La politica della santità. Nascita di un culto nell'età dei lumi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1996, pp. 157-165.

46. Saggi, *S. Angelo di Sicilia*, pp. 289-292.

47. Jean-Marie Sansterre, "Signes de sainteté et vecteurs de 'virtus' dans les miracles postumes du carme Albert de Trapani relatés aux XIV^e-XV^e siècles", *Analecta Bollandiana*, 133 (2015), pp. 433-441; Marco Papisidero, "Terapia e taumaturgia nei 'miracula' di sant'Alberto da Trapani", *Hagiographica*, 25 (2018), pp. 149-174.

48. Pio Simonelli, *Il B. Luigi Rabata carmelitano. Studio sulla figura e sul culto. Testo dei processi canonici del sec. XVI*, Rome, Edizioni Carmelitane, 1968; Papisidero, "Il beato Luigi Rabatà"; Marco Papisidero, "A laudi Deu". *Luigi Rabatà tra storia, memoria e pratiche devozionali*, Rome, Edizioni Carmelitane, 2019, pp. 62-66.

49. Erminio Gallo, *Placido. Il discepolo di Benedetto descritto da Pietro Diacono*, Trapani, Il Pozzo di Giacobbe, 2020, pp. 172-180.

50. On the practice of preparing drinks by immersing relics into liquids such as water and wine, see Pierre-André Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale: XI^e-XII^e siècle*, Paris, CNRS, 1985, pp. 49-56.

spring was also delivered to merchants and found its way to various places in the Mediterranean, confirming the ease with which the cults travelled in the early modern age in perfect continuity with the Middle Ages, and hence regardless of the impact of the Reformation, which outrightly condemned such practices.

As we learn from the Carmelite priest Gaspare Galluzzo,⁵¹ despite the situation of emergency, the friars of the convent celebrated the Forty Hours exposition. This liturgical devotion was particularly widespread in the 16th century and generally, but not always, took place during the Easter period, as it referred to the forty hours that the body of Christ is traditionally believed to have remained in the tomb.⁵² Although the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament is not described in detail, it is easy to decipher it as one of the actions involved in the solemn recourse to divine aid. The exposition is, in itself, an act charged with both symbolic and semiotic value, in that it activates and releases the miraculous virtues of the Blessed Sacrament that are normally kept concealed.⁵³ The exceptional trust in the miraculous power of its exposition is confirmed by the words of the witness: “Facendosi per li padri del convento del decto sancto li Quaranthori in decta chiesa, il decto male subito terminò”.⁵⁴ The devotional practice was carried out by the friars, who thus ensured their spiritual assistance. As a result, the Carmelite sanctuary appeared as a place filled with miraculous *virtus*, capable of saving the city through the prayers raised to the saint.

Therefore, relics played a major role in private devotional and therapeutic practices, since they were used for individual cure; at the same time, they were also used in collective rituals to implore the aid of the saint. It was once again Carlo Giliberto who recorded how, in June 1624, a year before the plague arrived in Licata, “si fecero varii et diversi processioni acciò si placasse Dio, con uscire le decte sante reliquii del detto sancto martyre per tutta la città, andando ogni persona discalsa, pregando il Signore per la liberatione di decte città [Trapani, Palermo, Castelvetrano, Castronovo, Cammarata, etc.] et preservatione di questa”.⁵⁵ The relics were

51. The celebration of the Forty Hours is also confirmed by Giovanni Giacomo La Scalia (*Miracula et beneficia*, f. 29v).

52. *Ibid.*, f. 19r.

53. See Massimo Leone, “Wrapping Transcendence: The Semiotics of Reliquaries”, *Signs and Society*, 2/1 (2014), pp. 49-83.

54. *Miracula et beneficia*, f. 19r.

55. *Ibid.*, f. 9v.

hence displayed and carried in procession, symbolically and physically touching on the various parts of the city in such a way that the infection would not reach or linger in them.⁵⁶

Among the other practices of “miraculous treatment” implemented to halt the spread of infection was that described by the priest Orazio Contrera, which entailed sprinkling the holy water in the houses: “S’ordinò fra questo che ogn’uno spargesse per le case acqua del benedecto fonte del glorioso sancto”,⁵⁷ as also confirmed by the notary Giacomo Murci.⁵⁸ Far from being a hygienic precaution, the sprinkling of holy water in the home signified a symbolic and miraculous decontamination. Since the water was replete with the *virtus* of the saint, it was capable of sanctifying the homes that were one of the primary sites of infection, in what was almost an operation of public health. The holy water apparently possessed a formidable power to prevent contagion, so that when it was applied to someone or something, it halted the spread of the disease. This therapeutic and anti-contagious quality was further confirmed by Francesco De Caro, *utriusque iuris doctor*, who justified the fact that everyone went to wash themselves in the water by explaining that “evidentemente si conosceva chi [that] preservava dalla infectione”.⁵⁹ In the absence of drugs that were effective against the plague, the remedies furnished by the saints were perceived as a powerful means of healing. They were applied like medicine: the water was drunk or used for washing, while fragments of the wooden reliquary casket were placed in contact with the body or even consumed like medicinal preparations.⁶⁰

The saint’s protection of the areas under his patronage frequently led to a permanent ratification, which was not only part of the collective

56. Kim Knott, “Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion”, *Temenos: Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion*, 41/2 (2005), pp. 153-184; Kim Knott, “Geography, Space and the Sacred”, in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*, ed. by John R. Hinnells, London-New York, Routledge, 2010, pp. 476-491; David Chidester, “Space”, in *The Oxford Handbook of the Study of Religion*, ed. by Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 329-339.

57. *Miracula et beneficia*, f. 66r. See also the testimony of the notary Giacomo Murci (f. 127r).

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*, f. 68v.

60. See Luigi Canetti, “‘Olea sanctorum’. Reliquie e miracoli fra Tardoantico e alto Medioevo”, *Olio e vino nell’alto Medioevo. Settimane del Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo*, 54 (2007), pp. 1335-1415.

memory but also affected the local civil and religious calendar. The protection attributed to St Angelus during the plague of 1625 led the local religious and civil authorities to move the saint’s feast day from 5 May to 16 August, as referred by Francesco De Caro, among others: “Et in breve con tucto ciò havesse decta infermità dilatatosi per tutta la città, suo borgo et compagnia, per il quale ricevuto benefitio questa città ha transferito la festa, palio et fera del decto martyre, suo protectore, perpetuamente dalli cinque di maggio a 16 d’agosto”.⁶¹

The transfer of the feast and the related initiatives – the palio and the fair – marked the new positioning of the day for honouring the saint within the liturgical calendar.⁶² Indeed, when catastrophic events involved the intervention of a supernatural agent in the preservation of the faithful, they often had a concrete impact on liturgical and civil life. The consecration of a feast day for the saint that transferred his memory from one day to another signified acknowledging his ability to alter the course of history.

Finally, the day on which the infectious disease was identified as the plague coincided with the feast day of an important saint: Anthony of Padua. This coincidence is commented upon in various testimonies, including that of Francesco Perconti, who wrote: “fu alfine a 13 di decto mese dechiarato per reale et veridica peste, che fu il giorno di sancto Antonio di Padova”.⁶³ The reference to St Anthony is not supernatural: his aid is not invoked, nor is he considered to have helped the city. Nevertheless, it shows us a sense of time that is strongly anchored to the liturgical calendar.⁶⁴

The specific protection against the plague that St Angelus was able to offer the city of Licata is also illustrated in an important iconographic source contained in the manuscript copy of the inquiry into miracles conserved in the Carmelite Archive in Rome (Fig. 1). The image shows the saint with his principal attributes – the palm of martyrdom, threaded onto which are the three crowns symbolising virginity, martyrdom and doctrine, in Carmelite dress with a dagger in his chest.⁶⁵ In the background

61. *Miracula et benefitia*, f. 72r.

62. The transfer of the feast day is also mentioned by Francesco Grugno (*Miracula et benefitia*, f. 111v) and the priest Andrea Lombardo (f. 139r).

63. *Ibid.*, f. 35v.

64. See Jacques Le Goff, *A la recherche du temps sacré. Jacques de Voragine et la Légende dorée*, Paris, Perrin, 2011.

65. The same attributes, with some variations, are also present in the iconography of St Peter Martyr. See Saggi, *S. Angelo di Sicilia*, p. 312.



Fig. 1. Anon., *The Carmelite St Angelus protecting Licata from the Plague*, in *Miracula et beneficia* (AGOC POST. III 2).

is a settlement, to be identified with Licata. At top left, set upon a cloud, is Christ holding an arrow pointing downwards, and hence towards Licata. Based on a long tradition going back to antiquity, the arrow is a symbol of the plague, attribute of Apollo who employed it to scourge mankind with the deadly disease. This symbolism traversed the Middle Ages, so that St Sebastian – who epitomised the saint martyred by being shot with arrows – also became one of the principal saints invoked against the plague.⁶⁶ Therefore, in line with the idea expressed by the witnesses that

66. Franco Cardini, “Il Sogno e il Mistero: le frecce di San Sebastiano, ovvero quello che sognò il Priore di San Pietro Scheraggio”, in Franco Cardini, *Le mura di Firenze inargentate: letture fiorentine*, Palermo, Sellerio, 1993, pp. 17-28; Sheila Barker, “The Making of a Plague Saint: Saint Sebastian’s Imagery and Cult Before the Counter-

the disease was sent by God, the 17th-century image in the manuscript shows Christ holding the arrow since he is to be understood as the agent of the epidemic. However, St Angelus protects the city, not only because he watches over it from the hill on which he is shown, but also through the gesture of his right hand. Further, his kneeling position indicates the posture of praying to God, fully demonstrating that he wishes to protect Licata. Finally, a legend that appears to emerge from the mouth of the saint reaching up to Christ contains the supplication to the Lord: “Recordare Domine testamenti mei”. The reference is to the antiphon *Recordare, domine, testamenti tui*,⁶⁷ which was amply documented in the Middle Ages and which is listed in the *Cantus Manuscript Database* among the antiphonaries drawn up between the 10th and 16th centuries.⁶⁸

The antiphon is related to the Old Testament episode of the three days’ pestilence that the Lord sent upon Israel under David through the angel (2 Sam 24:15). But before the allotted time was up, the Lord took pity and told the angel to stop: “It is enough: stay now thine hand”.⁶⁹ The words put in the mouth of St Angelus refer to those of the antiphon, which in turn is based on the biblical story. The crucial theme is God’s intervention in favour of Israel by halting the plague that He himself had sent. However, in the case of St Angelus in the illustration, there is a small variation on the antiphon, where the Lord is invoked and exhorted to recall *testamenti tui*, and hence His pact with Israel that it would not be destroyed. Instead, in the engraving, it is the saint who addresses these words to God – and not the assembly – by virtue of the pact that he has symbolically entered into with Him (*testamenti mei*). It seems plausible that this lexical change refers to the saint’s martyrdom and his merit with God, by virtue of which he can request and be granted that He shall not strike the city of Licata with plague.

Another work that refers to the specialised protection against pestilence of St Angelus is conserved in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Morrocco, Tavarnelle Val di Pesa (Florence). The painting by Nanno da

Reformation”, in *Piety and Plague: From Byzantium to the Baroque*, ed. by Franco Mormando and Thomas Worcester, Kirksville, Truman State University Press, 2007, pp. 90-131.

67. The full text is: “Recordare domine testamenti tui et dic angelo percutienti cesset jam manus tua ut non desoletur terra et ne perdas omnem animam vivam” (*Cantus Manuscript Database*: <https://cantus.uwaterloo.ca/>).

68. See <https://cantus.uwaterloo.ca/search?t=recordare+domine+testamenti+tui>.

69. King James Version, 2 Sam 24:16.



Fig. 2. Nanno da San Gimignano, *Martyrdom of St Sebastian with Saints Angelus and Roch*, Tavarnelle Val di Pesa (Florence), Church of Santa Maria del Carmine al Morrocco. © Wikimedia Commons.

San Gimignano, dating to 1643, portrays Angelus together with two other important saints invoked against the plague, St Sebastian and St Roch, demonstrating that Angelus was invoked against the plague even beyond Licata and that he acquired this particular fame and specialisation within the Carmelite order (Fig. 2).⁷⁰

Unfortunately, none of the numerous *ex votos* mentioned in the deeds of the inquiry have survived. This makes it impossible to analyse the images of the saint on the votive pictures donated by the faithful between the end of the 16th and the early 17th century, which would have revealed many details of the portrayal of Angelus's heroic action against the plague.

70. The church of San Rocco in La Valletta, Malta, conserves a 17th-century painting by Stefano Erardi portraying St Angelus and St Roch at the feet of Mary Immaculate. I should like to thank Pierangelo Timoneri for having pointed out these two works.

4. *Individual protection*

While most of the witnesses mention Angelus’ overall protection of the city of Licata as an important memory of collective defence,⁷¹ many of the accounts also include references to precise episodes of healing involving individuals that make a significant contribution to the history of disease and medicine in the early modern age. The number of these episodes illustrates the profound and widespread belief in the supernatural aid offered by the saint to the many individual citizens who requested his help. From this perspective, the inquiry into miracles relating to St Angelus is identical to the processes carried out in Palermo and San Fratello for Benedict the Moor, which offer a large number of miracles and prodigies attributed to the saint’s intercession.

I have selected just one of these numerous miraculous episodes related to the plague as an example of both narrative structure and of the healing practices involved. The witness Caterinuccia Pirrello, illiterate, who at the time of her statement was twenty-one years old, recounted that her son Angelo had caught the plague, realising this because there emerged “nella mano sinistra una papola quanto un bono tarì, con un boczo socto la scilla destra, con grandissima febre et stordimento”.⁷² The sign of the disease was unequivocal: a papule the size of a coin above his left hand and a bubo in the right armpit, accompanied by fever and intense dizziness. The child – who was four years old and named after the saint, and who was “già votato et vestito [...] dell’habito del glorioso vergine et martyre carmelitano” as a sign of devotion and protection – had caught the plague. Caterinuccia and her mother-in-law decided to make recourse “all’intercessione di decto santo”.⁷³ Having taken the oil from the lamp that burned above his relics, “quello lo mese sopra decta papula et boczo di decto figliolo, non cessando per tutta la nocte d’invocare il nome di decto santo l’agiutassi”.⁷⁴ The application of the miraculous unguent was accompanied by the continual invocation of the saint’s name, imploring the hoped-for miracle.

71. See Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, Paris, PUF, 1950; Ugo Fabietti, Vincenzo Matera, *Memoria e identità. Simboli e strategie del ricordo*, Rome, Meltemi, 1999; Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011.

72. *Miracula et benefitia*, f. 92v.

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*, ff. 92v-93r.

The invocation of the name, together with the use of contact or secondary relics and efficacious liquids, is clearly one of the most common rituals for invoking a miraculous cure. The continuance of the invocation “per tutta la nocte” indicates not only the level of despair and the gravity of the situation, but also the need to literally assail the saint with requests for aid so that he would yield and intervene.⁷⁵ The results of the long healing ritual became evident the following day: “al decto figliolo li passò la febre, spario il boczo et insieme si desiccò decta papola”.⁷⁶ The disappearance of the bubo and the drying up of the papule were recognised as signs of the saint’s intervention. He had exercised his individual protection over Caterinuccia’s little boy, albeit by virtue of the family’s devotion and citizenship of Licata. Here, as is often the case, the account also extends to a second miracle. Four days after her son was cured, Caterinuccia developed the same symptoms: pain in her right armpit accompanied by a large swelling and fever. The healing process was therefore repeated, particularly in view of the success it had already had in her home.⁷⁷

The final section of the miracle testimonies included in the inquiry almost always contains a reference to the offering of an *ex voto* at the sanctuary of St Angelus. Frequently, this was in the form of a small votive image. In this case, however, Caterinuccia and her mother-in-law thanked the saint “con portarli una tovaglia, et li fecero celebrare dui messi, una cantata et l’altra lecta”.⁷⁸

Another aspect of devotion to the saint during the epidemic that is worth mentioning is the protection and presence that he demonstrated to his faithful even when they were “barragiati” – that is, isolated in their homes, usually for forty days – or taken to the *lazaretto* that had been set up in the area known as Giarretta close to the river Salso that crossed the city, in the vicinity of the church of the Madonna di Loreto. With the advent of the plague, the city councillors had indeed ordered that sick people should remain in isolation at their homes, in the city or the countryside, and were to be taken to the *lazaretto* if they contracted the disease. Naturally, the *lazaretto* was a place that one

75. This approach is, moreover, not very different from that employed by the saint himself in relation to God, as well as being the essence of religious prayer when imploring aid from a supernatural helper. St Angelus obtained from God the protection of the city from the storm through “li suoi caldi prieghi” (see § 5).

76. *Miracula et benefitia*, f. 93r.

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Ibid.*

was not always certain to return from. In these circumstances, especially in the case of isolation in the home, the faithful are always described in the act of invoking and praying to the saint and performing healing rituals, all of a distinctly medical-miraculous quality.

Numerous statements collected during the process reveal that a number of infected people preferred not to inform the councillors of Licata or the health authorities about their state of health, to avoid the risk of being taken to the *lazaretto*. For instance, Luca Perconti, brother of the already mentioned physician Francesco Perconti, was in quarantine at his brother’s house when he realised that he was becoming ill. Nevertheless, “esso testimonio non palesò decto dolore a nessuno”,⁷⁹ resorting instead to a piece of wood from the coffin of the saint which had been given to him by his brother, who had received it from the health officials. Concealing having the disease was therefore justified by not wanting to go to the *lazaretto*, but also indicated a total trust in the saint. In fact, Perconti and his family devoted themselves exclusively to the practice of treatment through relics, dividing amongst them the available piece of wood “et parti si mangiaro et parti esso testimonio più volte con quello toccava in decto dolore”.⁸⁰

The reading of the events recorded in the deeds of the process reveals that, although St Angelus protected the city by drawing the plague to his own district and ensuring that it ended after a short time, there was a certain spread of the infection that affected various people who had to resort to the aid of the saint. The action of St Angelus was therefore twofold: collective protection aimed at preserving Licata as a whole from the threat of the plague, and direct action in individual cases that had, so to speak, evaded the overall protection of the city.

The devotional practices recorded for the period of the plague definitely originated several centuries earlier, since they are connected with the oil from the saint’s lamp, the water from the spring and also another oil that gushed forth from the spring – namely, the site of martyrdom – on certain occasions. Plausibly, these practices can be dated back to at least the 15th century. On the other hand, given the particular quality of the liquids used for healing and their close connections with the hagiography and cult of St Angelus, they could not have existed prior to the cult, for instance in relation to other saints of the city or, more specifically, to saints Philip and James.

79. *Ibid.*, f. 96r.

80. *Ibid.*

5. *The storm of the early 17th century*

In addition to the pestilences, the deeds of the process also record another “catastrophic” event in which the saint’s protection proved essential. This was a terrible storm, indicated in the text by the Sicilian term *draghonara*, which means “tempest, heavy rainfall, downpour”.⁸¹ However, it is mentioned by only three witnesses, confirming that this event did not leave a particularly strong mark in the collective memory. According to the accounts of Giuseppe Carletto, Francesco Grugno and Marco de Averna, on 22 September about twenty years before – possibly in 1605 – at around three in the morning, a violent storm with high winds and heavy rain (“un gran tempo di pioggia et venti grandissimi”)⁸² struck the city of Licata, which, as Giuseppe Carletto recalled, appeared to be almost submerged (“che [the city] pareva si volesse sobbissare”).⁸³

After the storm blew over, the settlement appeared to have suffered relatively little damage. Carletto, who lived just behind the tribune of the church, declared that his house had been struck by one of the beams, although no one was injured.⁸⁴ Francesco Grugno recounted that a house had collapsed close to the military district, burying a Spaniard, but when the rubble was removed, he was found alive because, as the witness said, “havia in quel precinto invocato il nome di decto sancto”.⁸⁵ Therefore, in the recollection of the witnesses, the protection of St Angelus was ubiquitous, and there was no event that did not involve him.

Nevertheless, the roof of the church was badly damaged, and the beams had been carried by the water and wind even beyond the city. As Francesco Grugno specified, the wind had come in “dalla porta piccola del campanaro”.⁸⁶ The miraculous aspect suggesting the saint’s intervention was the fact that the lamp set in front of the relics had not been extinguished (“senza smorzare la lampa che era dinanti decte sancte reliquie”).⁸⁷ The

81. *Vocabolario Siciliano*, vol. I, ed. by Giorgio Piccitto, Palermo, Centro di Studi Filologici e Linguistici Siciliani, 1977, p. 921.

82. *Miracula et beneficia*, f. 25r.

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.*, f. 112r.

86. *Ibid.*

87. *Ibid.*, f. 25r.

councillor Marco de Averna provided additional details, describing the condition of the chapel of the relics during the first inspection:

[...] et essendo esso testimonio in quell' hora chiamato come giorato, [...] andò in decta chiesa [...] et vicino il cancello di legname della cappella di decte sancte reliquii, nella quale trovò la lampa quale sole ardere dinanti decte ste reliquii accesa con gran stupore, giaché decto temporale non havea havuto forza di smorzarla [...]. Et havendo venuto l' altri giorati et perché loro tenevano le chiave della grada di ferro delle decte sancte reliquii, havendo quelle aperte, le trovorno senza nessuna lesione, neanco il dammuso né l' ante cappella dove era decta lampa [...].⁸⁸

In his detailed description, De Averna notes that the relics were found substantially intact and had suffered no damage and, more significantly, that, despite the fierce wind, the lamp was still lit, all of this being seen as a sign of supernatural action. The general interpretation, as passed down by the three witnesses, was that St Angelus had averted the divine castigation evidently intended to strike the entire city (“nostro Signore voleva castigare decta città ma s'oppose il decto nostro protectore con li suoi caldi prieghi”).⁸⁹ In order to save Licata, the saint decided to unleash all the violence of the storm upon his own church, which was indeed severely damaged: “Ma volse il santo ricevere tutta la rovina sopra della sua chiesa”.⁹⁰ For this reason, too, the city and the confraternity of the saint undertook the reconstruction of the roof as a sign of their gratitude towards St Angelus.

Although it was only briefly described by a few witnesses, the episode of the storm clearly indicates how all natural events were effectively interpreted as supernatural. Even this potential catastrophe was a way of demonstrating the protection of the patron saint. This special assistance is identified in many aspects, albeit all connected with the saint's abode.⁹¹ The lamp that is not extinguished and continues to burn over his relics, the intact casket and the damage suffered by the church demonstrate the saint's wish to take upon himself the storm's destructive potential, to the advantage of the city.

88. *Ibid.*, f. 123v.

89. *Ibid.*, f. 25v.

90. *Ibid.*

91. Edina Bozóky, “La ‘maison’ des saints et les miracles”, in Edina Bozóky, *Le Moyen Age miraculeux. Etudes sur les légendes et les croyances médiévales*, Paris, Riveneuve, 2010, pp. 98-110.

6. *St Angelus as protector from earthquakes and the COVID-19 pandemic*

The devotion to St Angelus has persisted over time, and there are records of the numerous occasions on which Licata resorted to the saint to avert natural disasters of various kinds. Currently, his feast is celebrated on both 5 May, the anniversary of his death, and on 16 August. As mentioned, the latter date was established after the plague of 1625 as a commemoration of the deliverance of the city from the disease.

There are also other occasions over the year when a mass is celebrated to commemorate other calamities, in this case earthquakes. The first is 11 January, recalling the earthquake that struck Sicily in 1693 and that destroyed Noto. The second is 28 December, the anniversary of the earthquake of 1908 that destroyed Reggio Calabria and Messina.⁹² In both cases, the city of Licata gave thanks to its patron saint for his protection. On these occasions – or at least on the 11 January anniversary – the exposition of the relics was celebrated as a tangible sign of the protection and presence of the saint. Nowadays, the urn containing the relics is displayed only on the 11 January commemoration and remains in exposition for three days on the high altar; on the other occasions, only the chapel containing the urn is opened. Nevertheless, on the important 800th anniversary of the martyrdom of St Angelus in 2020 – extended as a result of the pandemic – a recognition of the relics was carried out together with an extraordinary exposition.⁹³

The protection of St Angelus from natural calamities such as earthquakes, storms and pestilences also made him a powerful intercessor during the COVID-19 pandemic.⁹⁴ More specifically, in addition to the numerous requests for help addressed to him by the devout through the Facebook page of the sanctuary – which was inaccessible due to rules for the prevention of infection – two further liturgical actions were implemented. On 25 March 2020, a prayer of intercession and benediction with the relics of the saint took place, during which a placing of trust in Christ and St Angelus was recited, explicitly requesting deliverance from the pandemic that was placed in direct

92. There is a third commemoration on 5 February in memory of the collapse of the cupola of the church around 1805. See Vincenzo Bruscia, *Un amico di S. Francesco morto a Licata*, Milan-Rome, Gastaldi, 1950, p. 36.

93. My thanks to Giacomo Vedda for providing this information.

94. See Marco Papasidero, “Miraculous Images and Devotional Practices in Italy at the Time of the Covid-19 Pandemic”, *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, 16/1 (2022), pp. 127-155.

relation with the pestilences in which the saint had provided his protection over the centuries. More specifically we read: “You, who once interceded to deliver Licata from the plague and who have always shown yourself to be its protector, continue to protect us even today and invoke deliverance from this disease”.⁹⁵ The second initiative took place on 29 March 2020, with a prayer recited simultaneously in Licata and in Mdina (Malta) by the Carmelites and the faithful followers of the martyr saint. As stated in the post published on the Facebook page of the sanctuary, the prayer was aimed at obtaining the saint’s protection “in this pandemic and scourge of COVID-19, as happened during the plague of 1675-1676”.⁹⁶ In other sanctuary posts, too, the prayer initiatives are always set in relation to the outbreaks of plague from which Licata was protected, especially that of 1675.

The prayers and hymns of popular tradition also contain references to Angelus’s specialised protection from natural disasters. At the end of one of the prayers to the saint, we read: “Continue to protect them [the people of Licata] from all scourges”, whereas in the hymn composed and set to music by the canon Vincenzo di Palma in 1920 we read: “Deliver us from the scourges / [...] From hunger, plague and war, / From the tremor of the earth / Preserve us, O great martyr / O glorious protector!”⁹⁷ The reference to natural catastrophes, such as famine, plague and earthquakes, is supplemented by the evils caused by man, such as war.

These examples connected with earthquakes and the recent pandemic show not only how recourse to St Angelus is still alive in Licata, but also how he is seen as the special protector against all natural disasters. Referring to his generic protection of the city is a fine engraving by Arnold van Westerhout (1651-1725), to a design by Sebastiano Conca (1680-1764), included in Carlo Filiberto Pizolanti’s *Delle memorie istoriche dell’antica città di Gela nella Sicilia*, published in Palermo in 1753.⁹⁸ It

95. “Licata prega il suo patrono sant’Angelo”, Santuario Sant’Angelo Licata Facebook page, 2020 (consulted online: <https://www.facebook.com/santuariosantangelo.licata/posts/1807332652735320>).

96. “Affidamento a Cristo e a sant’Angelo da recitare in comunione spirituale oggi 25 marzo 2020 alle ore 19:30”, Santuario Sant’Angelo Licata Facebook page, 2020 (consulted online: <https://www.facebook.com/santuariosantangelo.licata/posts/1807965412672044>).

97. From the official website of the sanctuary: http://www.santuariosantangelo.it/santo/preghiere_e_canti.htm.

98. Ciro D’Arpa, “La Madonna di Ravanusa nei Raguagli di padre Ottavio Gaetani: l’incisione di Giovanni Federico Greuter tra istanze civiche e ragioni artistiche”, *Rivista*



Fig. 3 Arnaldo Westerhout (engraver); Sebastiano Conca (inventor), in Carlo Filiberto Pizolanti, *Delle memorie istoriche dell'antica città di Licata nella Sicilia*, Palermo, 1753.

shows St Angelus with his habitual attributes: the palm of martyrdom with the three crowns, the sword carried by a cherub and the Carmelite habit. Added to these is a lily carried by another angel and the saint's hand raised in benediction (Fig. 3). The saint is shown set upon a cloud in the sky, protecting the city of Licata shown below with its port.⁹⁹ The engraving does not make any explicit references to either earthquakes or the plague, merely presenting the saint as protector; overlooking the city, he symbolically guarantees its protection and control. This iconographic model – very common, especially in the early modern period and after the

dell'Osservatorio per le Arti Decorative in Italia, 8 (2013), note 51 (consulted online: http://www1.unipa.it/oadi/oadiriv/?page_id=1761).

⁹⁹ The same subject is shown in a 17th-century painting originating from the convent of Licata.



Fig. 4. Anonymous, 20th-century holy card showing St Angelus blessing the city of Licata.

Counter-Reformation – persisted almost unaltered into the 20th century. A 20th-century coloured holy card shows the same subject as Westerhout’s engraving (Fig. 4), with the saint in much larger dimensions than the city, and with rays of light emanating from the saint and from the cloud beneath him, illuminating the city. This graphic motif once again shows the special protection and the grace that Angelus grants to his faithful in Licata.

7. Conclusion

The cult of saints acquired new impetus in the period of the Counter-Reformation. The major theological discussions and the erudite investigations into the historic validity of the hagiographical traditions –

such as that of the Bollandists, who published the first volume of the *Acta Sanctorum* in 1643¹⁰⁰ – were scarcely reflected in traditional contexts where the gestures of devotion, such as the use of miraculous water in Licata, were handed down from father to son. However, the new outburst of devotional fervour in Sicily at the beginning of the 17th century materialised in the recognition of new or renewed cults – for instance, those of Santa Rosalia and of St Benedict in San Fratello – and their importance and heroic dimension were also confirmed by the production of sumptuous reliquary caskets that were exposed for the adoration of the faithful.¹⁰¹ The veneration of the saints and the acknowledgement of their protection of the cities emerged from the Counter-Reformation as an element that strengthened Catholic culture as one of the most representative aspects of its long history.

In general, the deeds of inquiry into miracles reveal very clearly how, in the minds of the citizens of Licata, or at least those directly involved in the process, the plague had been sent by God but, more importantly, the end of the pestilence was to be attributed to the intervention of St Angelus. The natural/supernatural duality was hence resolved by the inadequacy of human action to quell or attenuate the infection and the necessary recourse to the saint.

The catastrophes described in the text – the two plagues and the storm – illustrate how both the witnesses and the hagiographical documents and those of the process reveal a vision of the origin of the adverse events consistent with the Christian religious imagination. These events are caused by God, allowed or voluntarily willed by Him to punish the city for its sins. There is no reference to a malign origin for such catastrophes. The cause of the catastrophic events of a medical-sanitary (plague) or atmospheric (storm) nature is not natural. Although the event originates in the sphere of nature, this is seen merely as the context in which it arises. The real cause is to be identified in the supernatural sphere, in which God and the saints are the principal agency of catastrophes. The storm from which

100. Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Work of the Bollandists Through Three Centuries, 1615-1915*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1922; Gian Domenico Gordini, “L’opera dei bollandisti e la loro metodologia”, in *Santità e agiografia. Atti dell’VIII Congresso di Terni*, ed. by Gian Domenico Gordini, Genoa, Marietti, 1991, pp. 49-73.

101. Briefly: that of Santa Rosalia made in 1639, that of Sant’Angelo, dating to 1623, and that of Santa Lucia in Syracuse, composed of a late 16th-century statue set upon a later urn, offered to the city in 1620.

St Angelus protected Licata is, for instance, defined as a consequence of the fact that “nostro Signore voleva castigare decta città”,¹⁰² a will to which “s’oppose il decto nostro protectore”.¹⁰³ The saint’s action is hence almost in competition with and in opposition to that of God, and the main channel through which he intervenes is prayer (“con li suoi caldi prieghi”).¹⁰⁴ The result is a species of chain in which the citizens of Licata invoke the favour of the saint (request for action), who in turn prays to God not to act against them (request for inaction).

For Licata, St Angelus is the supernatural helper to be turned to in times of difficulty. As recorded in the testimony of Francesco Grugno, the citizens “non cessassero nelli loro calamità di raccomandarseci”.¹⁰⁵ Disasters and catastrophes are the collective occasions that most severely test the community’s relation with its patron saint, and it is in such moments that the patron’s capacity to protect the city is confirmed. The fact that the people of Licata can rely on St Angelus to provide the necessary safeguarding is confirmed during the collective emergency – and not just at times of personal need – by the prompt response they know he can provide. While the hagiography and the notarial report on the miracles¹⁰⁶ contribute to consolidating this awareness, these undoubtedly build on the existence of a profound faith in the saint based on previous experience of protection.

St Angelus’s protection of the citizens of Licata was consolidated in the collective memory by an epitaph produced by the notary Giacomo Murci on commission from the councillors, which was installed in the chapel of the relics to “descrivere un tale et tanto miraculo”.¹⁰⁷ Also very interesting is the dual safeguard offered by the saint: protection of the city, seen as a community requiring collective aid, and the personal protection of the sick individuals and those in need of a miracle.

One of the key themes emerging in the narration of the catastrophes in the documents is that the saint’s help is seen primarily as a “taking upon himself”. We have seen how, during the plague of 1625, the citizens

102. *Miracula et benefitia*, f. 25v.

103. *Ibid.*

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*, f. 111v.

106. *Notai, miracoli e culto dei santi. Pubblicità e autenticazione del sacro tra XII e XV secolo. Atti del Seminario internazionale* (Rome, 5-7 December 2002), ed. by Raimondo Michetti, Milan, Giuffrè, 2004.

107. *Miracula et benefitia*, f. 127r.

considered the rapid decline in infection miraculous, noting how it had begun in some houses belonging to the confraternity of St Angelus, as if it were a special sign that this was where the disease had first struck. We have also seen how, during the storm, only the church was damaged, a sign that the saint preferred to sacrifice his own dwelling to save the city from destruction. The “taking upon himself” is therefore pivotal to the image of a saint who takes direct action to protect his faithful, sacrificing his own specific locations like an “invisible friend”.¹⁰⁸ God and saint appear to cover thematically different roles: God punishes and chastises;¹⁰⁹ the saint helps, welcomes and safeguards, fulfilling all the roles of physical, spiritual and symbolic proximity normally performed by a guardian. The tutelary function of the patron saint is therefore confirmed by the statements and evidence in the *Miracula et beneficia* of St Angelus, which offer a clear picture of the complex cultural history of early 17th-century Sicily.

108. Apropos this type of supernatural intervention, a similar case can be mentioned. In 1576, the city of Cosenza was struck by plague. Tradition holds that the infection ceased spreading only when the entire population rushed to invoke the help of Our Lady. More specifically, while praying in front of the Byzantine icon of the *Madonna del Pilerio*, one of the faithful noticed that a bubo had appeared on the face of the image. In this case, too, as the contagion receded over the following months, the episode was interpreted and consigned to collective memory as a sign that the Virgin – who became the patron saint of the city after the event – had wished to take the disease “upon herself” to protect the citizens.

109. Apropos the storm that struck Licata at the beginning of the 17th century, Francesco Grugno stated that “si crede che Dio volse dimostrare rovinare tutta decta città et occidere quanti personi erano in quella” (*Miracula et beneficia*, f. 112r).

JUAN MANUEL LUNA CRUZ

Digital Maps and Information Networks in the Early Modern Era: Some Cases of Disasters and Heroes

1. *Introduction*

Applying digital humanities to the history of journalism, and specifically to dynamic cartographic representation, is a field of knowledge that has been explored for some time, although there is still a long way to go.¹ The study presented here describes the process of making a geospatial web application through which to observe the networks for the dissemination of news and information in the 17th century (specifically, from 1618 to 1635), as well as their representation in cartographic systems (in this case, dynamic maps) through the observation and analysis of the communication flows that appear in the news pamphlets. The information flowed along road networks and across the sea, as did commercial activity. So, news of an event happening in Bohemia soon reached Spain, at the other end of the Mediterranean.² Seville, Valencia, Barcelona and Rome were cities with important centres of social, political and cultural activity. Observation on a dynamic map, made using a geospatial web application³ crossing different variables, such as the year the item was published or the

1. The concept of digital humanities will be explained on subsequent pages. Also, in future sections of this study, we will review some of the most outstanding projects in the field of digital humanities.

2. Javier Díaz Noci, “The Iberian Position in European News Networks”, in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2016, pp. 193-215.

3. Ero Lombao Blanco, *Visualización de fluxos de información en novas do século XVII*, PhD dissertation, A Coruña, Universidade da Coruña, 2018, p. 2. Ero Lombao Blanco’s Master’s thesis for his degree in Geoinformatics at the Universidade da Coruña, under the supervision of Professor Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Luaces.

route taken by the news, would make it possible to clearly observe and analyse in detail the information networks that existed in the 17th century. Although a great deal of research has been done on news networks in the early modern period,⁴ these studies mainly deal with the topics, the information itself in the news pamphlets, the notifications or the political situation of the time. No one has taken the step of making an application to display news on a digital map.

News networks “transported” information from one side of the European continent to the other, or from the Turkish peninsula to the Iberian Peninsula. Many authors have analysed these communication flows that came via letters or notifications.⁵ Within these networks, there were cities that acted as crossroads, where news arrived from one point of the continent and was transmitted from that city to another place. In an example, Arblaster explains the method used to send information to Spain:

 Packets to Spain, for example, could be sent to Paris by an Antwerp carrier, forwarded to Bordeaux with the Parisian carrier, and then taken from Bordeaux to Spain by Spanish carriers, competing with the Tassis family’s direct but unreliable Spanish service.⁶

The author investigated how news circulated in the Habsburg territories between 1550 and 1700. He pointed out that what the gazettes or pamphlets did was to circulate information among the lower classes in society, as the news had already been heard in the royal courts, from the pulpits of the churches or in the villages near a battle or a war.⁷ These

4. *News Networks in Early Modern Europe; The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron, London, Routledge, 2001; *La aparición del periodismo en Europa. Comunicación y propaganda en el Barroco*, ed. by Roger Chartier and Carmen Espejo Cala, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2012.

5. Brendan Dooley, “News and Doubt in Early Modern Culture: Or, Are We Having a Public Sphere Yet?”, in *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron, London-New York, Routledge, 2001, pp. 275-291.

6. Arblaster explains that people who carried out mercantile transport provided a slower service, but with advantages. They could also adapt to circumstances. For example, these carriers could more easily change their route due to weather, road conditions or other eventualities. See Paul Arblaster, *From Ghent to Aix: How They Brought the News in the Habsburg Netherlands, 1550-1700*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2014, pp. 46-47.

7. In the study, the author also focuses on how news circulated in the southern Netherlands and highlights the importance of the reputation of the Habsburg dynasty and the attempts to create uniform censorship legislation. Arblaster, *From Ghent to Aix*, shows some maps and infographics featuring communication networks. Other authors

publications expanded the networks to a national and continental level and were not merely local.

Burke and Infelise dealt with information centres, the reception of notifications and their dispatch to other parts of Europe.⁸ They studied the cases of Rome as the power centre of the Catholic Church and as a point of great influence during the wars that took place between states, due to the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. As the great power centre of the Catholic Church, Rome was an essential nexus in the period discussed here due to the religious wars that took place between 1618 and 1648. Another important city was Venice, because of its port on the eastern side of the Mediterranean, connected both to the Italian peninsula and Rome and to Constantinople and the Turkish and Greek ports. It was a city where news circulated very quickly and went deep into the heart of Europe towards the German principalities or France, or across the Adriatic Sea to Naples, Rome, Genoa or Spain.⁹

Díaz Noci, who analysed the circulation of news in Baroque Spain, set the standard for this type of study, highlighting aspects of the existing contacts

who study this phenomenon are: Nicholas Brownlees, "Reporting the News in English and Italian Diplomatic Correspondence", in *Letter Writing in Late Modern Europe*, ed. by Marina Dossena and Gabriella Del Lungo Camiciotti, Amsterdam-Philadelphia, John Benjamins Pub. Co., 2012, pp. 121-138; Nicholas Brownlees, "The Constraints and Exploitation of Textual Space in the Seventeenth-Century Periodical Press", in *Space, Place and the Discursive Construction of Identity*, ed. by Julia Bamford, Franca Poppi and Davide Mazzi, Berne, Peter Lang, 2014, pp. 135-156; Jean Pierre Étiennevre, "Entre relación y carta: los avisos", in *Las "Relaciones de sucesos" en España (1500-1750), actas del primer Coloquio Internacional (Alcalá de Henares, 8, 9 y 10 de junio de 1995)*, ed. by María Cruz García de Enterría, Henry Ettinghausen, Víctor Infantes and Agustín Redondo, Alcalá de Henares-Paris, Editorial Universidad de Alcalá-Publications de la Sorbonne, 1996, pp. 111-122.

8. Peter Burke, "Rome as Center of Information and Communication for the Catholic World, 1550-1650", in *From Rome to Eternity: Catholicism and the Arts in Italy*, ed. by Pamela M. Jones and Thomas Worcester, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2002, pp. 253-269; Mario Infelise, "News Networks Between Italy and Europe", in *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Brendan Dooley, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010, pp. 51-67.

9. Peter Burke, "Early Modern Venice as a Center of Information and Communication", in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State, 1297-1797*, ed. by John Martin and Dennis Romano, Baltimore-London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000, pp. 389-419. Venice was the backbone of communications between East and West across the Adriatic Sea and, because of the importance of the Republic and its expansion, it received a great deal of information from Constantinople.

for communicating news about events in the 17th century.¹⁰ Specifically, he analysed the news coverage surrounding the raising of the siege of Fuenterrabía. He also highlighted the position of the Iberian Peninsula in the European news network. The author commented on the importance of the Spanish court among the European states and on how news reached Spain from any point in Europe, while methodologically explaining the criteria for studying the gazettes and their notifications that were published on the Iberian Peninsula during the early modern period.¹¹

Espejo Cala studied the news market in Spain with the example of the *Gazeta de Roma* and described the news networks as a “preocupación historiográfica por confirmar el carácter pan-europeo del primer periodismo, en evidente paradoja con la consolidación de los Estados nacionales y de las fronteras religiosas y lingüísticas por estas mismas fechas”.¹² In the study, Cala demonstrated that the news was read by people on both sides of the European continent, based on the same sources and in very similar ways, although in different languages and with different ideologies. Similarly, she analysed Rodrigo de Cabrera’s accounts of events between 1595 and 1600.¹³ In his study, he pointed out the frequency of these and the channels of communication from the Turkish wars in Transylvania to Seville via Rome, offering an example of these news networks.¹⁴

In his contribution on the news networks between Italy and Europe, Infelise stressed the importance of Rome as an information and

10. Javier Díaz Noci, “La circulación de noticias en la España del Barroco”, in *La aparición del periodismo en Europa*, pp. 207-244.

11. He analyses the large number of references (from Quevedo to secretaries of the 17th-century kings) on the connections between Spain and the rest of Europe via letters and notifications.

12. Carmen Espejo Cala, “El mercado de las noticias en España: La *Gazeta de Roma* (Valencia, 1619)”, in *Proto-giornalismo e letteratura. Avvisi a stampa, relaciones de sucesos*, ed. by Gabriel Andrés, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2013, pp. 25-54: 25.

13. Carmen Espejo Cala, “La circulación de las noticias en España a finales del siglo XVI. Relaciones de sucesos de Rodrigo de Cabrera (1595-1600) sobre las guerras turcas”, *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico*, 21/1 (2015), pp. 89-103.

14. According to Espejo Cala, at the end of the 16th century there was already a case of a printer who collected information coming from the other side of Europe and who published it, because the population was interested in knowing what was happening. Another author who has researched Rodrigo de Cabrera is Rubén González Cuerva, “‘El prodigioso príncipe transilvano’: la larga guerra contra los turcos (1596-1606) a través de las relaciones de sucesos”, *Studia historica. Historia moderna*, 28 (2006), pp. 277-299.

communication centre and the Italian ports as intermediate links for the transfer of news coming from different parts of Europe.¹⁵ Similarly, Petitjean highlighted the connection that information and communication channels had between Italy and the Mediterranean.¹⁶ In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, the Italian peninsula was at the centre of the known world, so all the news of conflicts between Berbers, Turks or Protestants and the Spanish, Catholics, French, German princes or Austrian dukes passed through the cities named above, such as Rome, Naples, Venice and Genoa, which will appear in the analysis in this study.

In recent years, news networks have been the focus of the international interdisciplinary research project *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*. One of the aspects dealt with by this network refers to the main features of these networks: the international news network that developed from the mid-15th to the 17th century (1450 to 1650) did not derive from a single state or institution. Diplomatic channels gave rise to the first news networks and determined the forms of communication. Local traditions or cultures of news publishing also spread via this network. Postal routes became the backbone for news communication, conditioning all its manifestations – handwritten and printed – and even its frequency. News moved freely along postal routes connecting different regions, giving rise to pan-European communication. The speed of information depended on the speed and frequency of the mail. Cities were essential to the functioning of the network. State censorship was exercised in international contexts, and information networks enhanced and even generated dividing lines, giving rise to various centres and peripheries.¹⁷

15. Infelise, “News Networks Between Italy and Europe”. Italy was fundamental in the communication and information networks as, geographically, it is at the centre of Europe and its main sea, the Mediterranean. Cities such as Rome, Naples, Palermo, Venice, Milan and Genoa acted as information hubs.

16. Johann Petitjean, *L'intelligence des choses: Une histoire de l'information entre Italie et Méditerranée, XVI^e-XVII^e siècles*, Rome, École Française de Rome, 2013. The author explains throughout the book how pamphlets in Italy and the other Mediterranean states involved dynamic contact in terms of politics, trade and, of course, news.

17. Ana Crespo Solana, “¿Redes de dependencia inter-imperial? Aproximaciones teóricas a la funcionalidad de los agentes de comercio en la expansión de las sociedades mercantiles”, in *Irlanda y el Atlántico Ibérico: movilidad, participación e intercambio cultural*, ed. by Igor Pérez Tostado and Enrique García Hernán, Valencia, Albatros, 2010, pp. 35-50.

One of the most recent important transformations in the historiography on journalism therefore consists of having understood the importance of geography:

Studies of news media have shifted their focus away from case studies and well-defined histories towards examining transnational connections of news, either by looking at a particular news flow (news exchanged between Constantinople and Venice, or the spread of news of a particular event), or by examining a large body of news (a collection of newsletters, say, or printed periodicals in one or more countries) and finding evidence of, and measuring, the movement of news through areas outside the immediate geography of that source material.¹⁸

Also, there was a developing of a new history of European journalism in the early modern period. It was based on a holistic, interconnected vision combining case studies with network analysis based on big data, as proposed by Ahnert,¹⁹ or with a massive intertextuality study as well as generating clear interfaces that allow data to be shared between projects divided between different countries. So, the world of news in the early modern period was precisely like a network: a complex, self-organising system. If it were possible to contemplate the whole of it on a map, we would see how the news circulated between different nodes or cities, moving via links or postal routes and necessarily passing through information hubs, which connected the periphery with the centre of the network.²⁰

The step from analysis to visualisation would present interesting options. The analysis could be superimposed upon a conventionally projected map, with the edges drawn to encode information about velocity. Or it could be a heat map, indicating the geographical spread of the richest sources. Alternatively, the spatial organisation of the nodes could reflect the distance between them measured by time: in which case we might find Antwerp and Augsburg adjacent to distant cities and other, physically proximate towns in areas with

18. Joad Raymond, Noah Moxham, “News Networks in Early Modern Europe”, in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2016, pp. 1-16: 5.

19. Ruth Ahnert, “Maps Versus Networks”, in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 130-157.

20. Ana Crespo Solana, “La historia geográficamente integrada y los Sistemas de Información Geográfica (SIG): concepto y retos metodológicos”, *Tiempos Modernos: Revista Electrónica de Historia Moderna*, 7/26 (2013).

irregular communication represented as remote. Such a visualisation presents distance as relative to speed, and therefore relativises geography.²¹

Baena-Sánchez, Fernández-Travieso, Espejo Cala and Díaz Noci suggested the need to seek strategies to standardise methods and protocols and to study archives in a systematic way.²² A common code is needed to be able to study the documents from the history of journalism and to describe the gazettes and news pamphlets based on the idea of seriality, which will be explained later, in the news channels and communication networks. They presented a project called EMNO, focused on conceptually describing and representing journalism in the early modern period using a semantic application through which a researcher can access the documents and digitised archives. All the accumulated and filtered data is provided to the user, so they can select the texts or images they need. Also, these scholars developed the way that semantic web technologies are applied to the history of journalism from the 16th to the 18th centuries, through a tool which allows for a description of all the information (explicit and implicit) in the different pieces of printed material so they can then be processed automatically by a computer processor. This then reveals the print journalism of the early modern era and retrieves information through an intelligent search thanks to its ability to make inferences.²³ These complex semantic searches would help find aspects of the printed news that are initially hidden and give examples of how they can be part of a series, as well as a copy or continuation of other news.

21. Joad Raymond, “News Networks: Putting the ‘News’ and ‘Networks’ Back In”, in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 102-129: 118.

22. Francisco Baena-Sánchez, Carlota Fernández-Travieso, Carmen Espejo Cala, Javier Díaz Noci, “Codificación y representación cartográfica de noticias. Aplicación de las humanidades digitales al estudio del periodismo de la Edad Moderna”, in *El profesional de la información*, 23/5 (2014), pp. 519-526. The researchers presented “una propuesta personalizada de esquema xml/TEI para codificar” news pamphlets or gazettes and “expusieron resultados de un estudio parcial sobre la representación cartográfica en internet de las redes de información que existían en la Edad moderna”, p. 520.

23. This project is called *Early Modern News* and is a “herramienta tecnológica básica para la posterior creación de un portal semántico” that would promote “avances en el estudio de la primera prensa de la Historia” (Francisco Baena-Sánchez, Carlota Fernández-Travieso, Carmen Espejo Cala, Javier Díaz Noci, “Codificación y representación cartográfica de noticias. Aplicación de las humanidades digitales al estudio del periodismo de la Edad Moderna”, *El profesional de la información*, 23/5 [2014], p. 522). Meanwhile, inference is a process in which conclusions are derived from a proposition.

All these studies have analysed how the digital humanities are being introduced into the study of the history of journalism. They are also proposals for this field to develop and become a fundamental tool for achieving results with printed material from the early modern period, with many hypotheses and ideas argued using digital elements.

There is a debate on the importance, consideration and dissemination of the digital humanities in different European countries. Rojas Castro pointed to the use of standards that can ensure the preservation of content and provide data exchange in a common network.²⁴ The scholar also encouraged the dissemination of best practices related to open access to allow the reuse of digitised heritage with public resources, as well as the promotion of a documentation plan to critically examine the studies by the scientific community. Thus, Rojas Castro referred to some challenges to be faced in the future for innovation, transparency and diversity within the digital humanities field in Spain.²⁵

There are projects on mapping applied to the study of the early modern period and the history of journalism that have a direct relationship with this study, such as the *Catálogo y Biblioteca Digital de Relaciones de Sucesos* (CBDRS).²⁶ This catalogue was developed by the news pamphlet research group based at the University of A Coruña, which has been working since 1992 for the Interdisciplinary Seminario Interdisciplinar para el Estudio de la Literatura Áurea Española (SIELAE), as well as several research projects funded by the Xunta of Galicia, the Spanish Government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Also, this research group created a repository called *Biblioteca Digital Siglo de Oro* (BIDISO), which offers sources for research on literature, the history of books, libraries and the art history of the 16th and 17th centuries. The databases includes digitised

24. Antonio Rojas Castro, “Las Humanidades Digitales: principios, valores y prácticas”, *Janus: estudios sobre el Siglo de Oro*, 2 (2013), pp. 74-99.

25. Work is gradually being done on the approaches made with respect to the distinction between digital and printed academic publishing. Rojas Castro pointed to three options: “la posibilidad de comparar distintas versiones o presentaciones de una obra”, so that “el lector tenga argumentos para juzgar las decisiones editoriales; el uso de enlaces para conectar los textos con varios documentos críticos o recursos multimedia”, to “mejorar la comprensión de la obra; y el diseño de una infraestructura que permita la recuperación de la información textual mediante búsquedas complejas estructuradas, concordancias o índices” (p. 93).

26. See <https://www.bidiso.es/CBDRS/ediciones/buscador-basico/p/1> (accessed 12 May 2020).

editions (facsimiles and transcribed texts) from private collections or institutional libraries, and much of the data used in this research has been taken from this repository.²⁷

Another research project related to the early modern period, communication networks and the history of journalism is the *Fuggerzeitungen*, funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) and directed by Katrin Keller.²⁸ The term *Fuggerzeitungen* coming from the history of communication and refers to handwritten newspapers from the 16th century. However, in a narrower sense, the word means a collection of manuscript periodicals compiled by the brothers Octavian Secundus and Philipp Edurd Fugger. There were 30 volumes of documents collected by the first brother between 1568 and 1600, and loose-leaf newspapers. The manuscripts of the correspondence of the Fugger trading house in Augsburg deal with wars, politics and events that were later used by printers and their communication networks to give notice of events in Vienna, Prague or Poland to the lower classes in European cities like Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia or Seville.²⁹ The collection currently has 27 volumes and approximately 1,000 other documents that are housed in the Austrian National Library of Vienna. The *Fuggerzeitungen* from European information centres like Venice or Antwerp often found news from elsewhere. For example, Venetian newspapers regularly included news from Genoa, Milan or Turin, as well as from Istanbul or Poland.³⁰ The cartographical representation of the *fuggerzeitungen* in the project shows the locations of all the newspapers in the collection. The data can be viewed as a function of the timeline. This

27. In the *Catálogo y Biblioteca Digital de Relaciones de Sucesos* (CBDRS), you can do a simple edition search or an advanced search, either by generic term or by the title of the edition, the person who appears in the account or the person who printed the content, the place of publication and the year, among other fields.

28. To see all the information about the project and its development, visit <http://fuggerzeitungen.univie.ac.at/en> (accessed 9 February 2020).

29. The project points out that “en términos de contenido, casi todos los temas encontrados en el Fuggerzeitung están presentes en los periódicos de hoy. Un enfoque es el informe político-militar, pero también se reflejan los eventos sociales, como las celebraciones, el ceremonial de la corte, la religión y la denominación, los casos penales y los informes económicos”. This coincides with the news coming from different parts of Europe in the event reports to be analysed. Retrieved from <https://fuggerzeitungen.univie.ac.at/was-sind-die-fuggerzeitungen> (accessed 15 July 2020).

30. Retrieved from <https://fuggerzeitungen.univie.ac.at/en/about-fugger-newsletters> (accessed 15 July 2020).

element can also be displayed on the map in the computer application of this study.³¹

Another project analysing social networks in the early modern period through digital reconstruction is *Six Degrees of Francis Bacon*, directed by Christopher Warren.³² It works on “a digital reconstruction of the early modern social network that scholars and students from all over the world can collaboratively expand, revise, curate and critique”, in which appear monarchs such as Elizabeth I or James I, nobles such as Francis Bacon or John Chamberlain, and writers such as Thomas Hobbes. The project can be extended to allow individuals and other organisations to add, modify, develop or eliminate elements of the great map of social relations between 1450 and 1750. People can be explored in individual and shared networks, as well as in groups via individual networks or the visualisation of the whole set.³³

Continuing with the representations of social networks, we find BIESES,³⁴ an acronym for *Bibliografía de Escritoras Españolas*, a database that summarises sources for the study of women’s writing. Within this project, researchers have developed women writers’ sociability networks based on books or on women writers. Among the aims of this project, it configures “a map that allows us to glimpse and intuit relationships and motivations that are otherwise imperceptible”. Its researchers have designed these sociability networks with two different programs: *Visone* and *Gephi*. About the first, the edges are straight and it is possible to draw more than one edge between two nodes to identify a variety of relationships between two subjects. Very clear layouts are offered for small or medium-sized networks. The *Gephi* program shows lines between nodes that are curved and distributes the network nodes in clusters or modules, identified by different colours. A cluster or module is a subset of nodes in a network that have special links to one other and that can be differentiated from other subsets. They are displayed on the basis of algorithms that are grouped in a way specific to the methodology. It should also be noted that the size of

31. The interactive map of *Fuggerzeitungen* contains all the locations issuing the newspapers in the Viennese collection. It can be a function of the timeline.

32. To access the *Six Degrees of Francis Bacon* project, visit http://sixdegreesoffrancisbacon.com/?ids=10000473&min_confidence=60&type=network (accessed 24 March 2020).

33. *Six Degrees of Francis Bacon* shows the nexus of the social networks of the main characters in early modern England.

34. See <http://www.bieses.net/> (accessed 30 May 2020).

the nodes does not vary as it does in the case of the *Visone* program, and the relative importance of the relationships can be seen in the thickness of the edge, i.e., the thicker it is, the greater the importance or number of the relationships between the two connected nodes.

2. *Objectives, corpus and method*

This chapter presents the development of a digital application through which the places where many events happened, where the news was written, and where a set of gazettes and news pamphlets from the years 1618 to 1635 was edited and published are represented cartographically and displayed in a geographic information system to find out what the information and communication networks in the early 17th century were like. The main hypothesis is that the presentation of the digital application in which the networks are displayed will help researchers understand how the importance of information centres evolved in the first half of the 17th century. The application will show how the places where gazettes were published, where news was written and edited and where events occurred changed over the years, which means the software will show that information centres changed over the decades. This digital tool can also help demonstrate that the digital humanities not only serve to represent data but also to generate knowledge that complements other insight obtained through more conventional analytical tools.

The main aim of the research is:

- to produce the digital application through cooperation with computer experts and to present to researchers the contribution that has been developed and the fields of application;
- to observe the results of the digital application and extract data from the communication flows in the production of news pamphlets and gazettes;
- to collect information on ongoing projects working with digital humanities and news networks;
- to create a database with all the notifications from the corpus printed material so they can be located in the future to check events and relate them to other research. This database will be created with a template so that other printed material from other repositories can continue to be added.

The effectiveness of the application will be assessed to find out if it really provides clear and precise conclusions about the subject of study on communication and information networks in the period discussed. The assessment will also be able to analyse whether this digital application can be transferred to other times in history at which the events happened, where news was written, and where gazettes and news pamphlets were edited and published. This assessment will show whether this data can be overlaid with earlier documents, i.e., from the 16th century, and continue throughout the 17th and 18th centuries. It should be clarified that routes are the physical spaces through which a news item may pass, whether they are roads or courses between one port and another. This is not the same as a communication network, which is part of the main focus of this study. A network is a connection between a city, a royal court or one state and another. In other words, the route is a physical path, and the network refers to the news connection between different points. The first element that will be clearly seen on the maps are the communication networks. A secondary objective will be to show the news routes.

The corpus we have worked with consists of 36 gazettes or news pamphlets kept in various European libraries. One of the series within this corpus are the eleven issues of Felipe Mey's *Gazeta de Roma*, almost all of which are known through the copies preserved in the Biblioteca Reale in Turin. Other gazettes and news pamphlets proceeded from different institutions, such as the Library of the Universidad de Sevilla, the Real Academia de España in Madrid, the Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal and the Biblioteca Da Ajuda in Lisbon and Library of the Universitat de Barcelona.

Soto Escobar noted that the corpus has some reprints of the same work published in Seville, Valencia, Madrid and Barcelona between 1618 and 1635.³⁵ He also suggested that, unfortunately, due to the absence of preserved publications, there is not a continuous sample with at least one copy per year. In the period from 1618 to 1621, there are fourteen publications; from 1624 to 1627, seventeen; in 1629, three, and in 1635, two. A total of 494 notifications were extracted, although the actual number is higher. However, publications 16, 17 and 18,³⁶ as well as 27

35. Rafael Soto Escobar, *Gacetas y avisos informativos: Género, redacción y práctica profesional entre 1618 y 1635*, PhD dissertation, Seville, Universidad de Sevilla, 2017, p. 72.

36. All the publications have titles like *Traslado de una carta en que declara todo lo sucedido en los Estados de Flandes, desde fin de Agosto, hasta 20 de Octubre de 1624*. The editions are from Madrid, Barcelona and Seville.

and 28³⁷ are reprints of the same work, so the notifications are the same, and in this research they are considered as one. Similarly, Soto Escobar and Espejo Cala emphasise that more than 70% of the origins of the documents are taken from direct attributions, although they stress that these are “*excepcionales y las fuentes son de segunda o tercera mano*”.³⁸ Within the corpus, there are cases of institutional sources within a religious order, a bishop, a Jesuit and a servant of a viceroy of Naples. The researchers also note that nearly 98% of the sources are covert (Table 1, at the end of the chapter).³⁹

The study presents a way of analysing the history of journalism through the digital humanities, so it can be analysed using various theoretical prisms depending on how it is considered. The purpose is to better understand history through the possibilities offered by different technologies, and specifically the existence of communication and information networks and flows in the middle of the 17th century due to the population’s interest in learning about political and military events throughout Europe. As previously mentioned, the general perspective assumed corresponds to the bases of two gnoseological disciplines, the history of journalism and digital humanities, together with the advocacy of several authors in recent years of communication and information networks.

I will now set out the main characteristics and the most important authors for improving the comprehension of this study. This system is based on determining nodes and the relationships between these nodes.⁴⁰ It is possible to analyse the network as a whole or using a nodal approach.⁴¹ The aim is to

37. The titles are: *Verissima relacion en que se da cuenta en el estado en que estan los Catolicos de Inglaterra por parte de los hereges, y con el zelo que la Reyna los favorece*, and *Relacion cierta de las novedades del Reyno de Inglaterra, y su Corte, embiada por un Catolico de la Ciudad de Londres a Paris Corte del Rey de Francia*, respectively.

38. Rafael Soto Escobar, Carmen Espejo Cala, “The Information Sources of the First Spanish Newspapers (1618-1635): The Construction of Information Credibility”, *Communication & Society*, 32/3 (2019), pp. 81-92: 85.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 88.

40. This is one of the objectives of the research: to explain the flow and networks of information between the different news hubs in Europe, the cities from where news was sent and where it was published.

41. Elisa Bellotti, *Qualitative Networks: Mixed Methods in Sociological Research*, London, Routledge, 2014 calls it “egonetwork”, i.e., the position of a node in the network as a whole. In this study, that would be equivalent to the position of cities in the European network of communication and information flows and networks.

determine which cities and information centres supplied information to the different gazettes and news pamphlets published in Valencia, Seville, Madrid and Barcelona and to find out the position these cities had in the continental network. Bellotti points out that social network analysis aims to describe nodes and relationships, channels and dissemination of information, also helping explain the construction of meaning through these processes, which is the goal of any content analysis.⁴²

Within the corpus, and with regard to the method for the cartographic representation of news networks at the beginning of the 17th century, the *Gazeta de Roma* series stands out because it is a correlation of semi-periodical gazettes published in Valencia by the printing house of Felipe Mey over approximately two years, between October 1618 and October 1620. This printer was doing nothing more than performing a common activity among European printers of his time: translating and printing Italian handwritten gazettes, almost Roman or Venetian ones.⁴³ This shows that the Spanish newspaper market was very dependent on the Italian market in the early decades of the 17th century. Similarly, the gazette genre was established on the Iberian Peninsula via Roman editions published in 1618 in Seville by Juan Serrano de Vargas and in Valencia by Felipe Mey. As suggested by Espejo Cala, the *Gazeta de Roma* is a paradigmatic example of the “preferential interest” that early modern gazettes showed in international news.⁴⁴ From a geopolitical perspective, this corresponded to the interests of the Spanish monarchy. The cities where the news was written, through correspondents or emissaries who reported from the places where the events happened or from what they had read in other gazettes, were Rome, Naples, Milan, Paris, Vienna, Prague and even Constantinople. These were the recurring news enclaves on the European information map at the beginning of the 17th century. These information centres are repeated on numerous occasions in the other copies in the corpus analysed.

From the point of view of digital humanities, Díaz Noci has already made a case for the suitability of social network analysis to explain what the flow of information was like in the early modern period between the

42. Bellotti, *Qualitative Networks*.

43. Carmen Espejo Cala, “The Invention of the Gazette: Design Standardization in Spanish Newspapers, 1600-1650”, *Media History*, 22/3-4 (2016), pp. 296-316.

44. Carmen Espejo Cala, “El primer periódico de la península Ibérica: la *Gazeta de Valencia* (1619)”, *Obra periodística*, 2 (2011).

main news hubs of the European continent (the cities from which news was sent or in which it was finally published).⁴⁵ He believes that this analysis method offers the possibility not only of describing nodes and relationships – in other words, the channels through which information is disseminated – but also of explaining what those processes mean.

There are variations on the news obtained first-hand, as reflected by Soto Escobar and Espejo,⁴⁶ and the information nuclei shifted towards the centre of the continent. Most of the news in the issues in the corpus begin with the Bohemian Revolt, led by a group of Protestant nobles who confronted the House of Habsburg. The conflict broke out after the Defenestration of Prague on 23 May of 1618, triggering the Thirty Years' War. The series begins in June 1618, with a pamphlet by Juan Serrano de Vargas in Seville and ends with one by Gabriel Nogues in Barcelona in 1635. The gap between publication dates shows a degree of continuity in some cases, such as the *Gazeta de Roma*, for which some copies were about a month apart. In other cases, there are long gaps between printings.

The first step for the research was the creation of a database, which contains the following fields:

- The place of printing, that is, the place where the gazettes are printed after the news has been compiled at the place of editing. These are always cities. The place may coincide with where the event happened, the place of notification or the place of editing. In such a case, we would be talking about local information.
- The place of editing, which means the place where all the news is compiled and the gazette is prepared. Just like the place of printing, it is always a city.
- The place of notification is where the news is written. It can be the same site as the event location or another one that is geographically close. This is not always made explicit in the text of the gazette. It can be a city, a region or a state.
- The place of the event: in other words, where the news happens.

45. Javier Díaz Noci, "Edición y análisis de prensa antigua: Una propuesta metodológica", in *Los retos de la investigación en historia de la comunicación: Entre la historicidad y las lagunas de la historiografía*, Barcelona, AHC-ALCAR, 2019; Javier Díaz Noci, *Estilo y narración en las primeras gacetas semiperiódicas españolas*, Barcelona, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, 2019, <http://hdl.handle.net/10230/41994> (accessed 19 April 2021).

46. Soto Escobar, Espejo Cala, "The Information Sources".

This represents the starting point of the information networks that we intend to visualise on the dynamic maps. News may happen in cities, regions or states. They are almost always specified in the text of the gazette, but it is not always easy to identify the place names, which may be poorly written or which may have changed over the years.

The unit of analysis we have worked with is the notification. The only information of interest is the explicit geographic information it contains, i.e., the places mentioned in the text. In the interface of the geospatial web application, the chronological variable has been taken into account, including the printing date of the gazettes, so that the maps can represent the development of these information networks over time. All locations categorised according to the above classification are shown on the map as interconnected one-way nodes, with the information flow starting at the event location and ending at the printing location. The dynamic map interface would also allow information to be retrieved from the gazettes by performing combined searches from the categorised locations: connecting the event location with the gazette printing location, with the editing location or with the notice location, or connecting the edition location with the notification location. The computer tool designed would therefore make it possible to draw the networks and information flows that crossed Europe during the 17th century on a map, as well as to make progress in studying the first journalism in history.

3. *Results*

Some of the results of this research derive from the collaboration that has been maintained in recent months among geoinformatics experts to explore the possibilities offered by GIS in the context of digital humanities. This collaboration led to the design of a geospatial web application, which should serve to visually represent the routes followed by the news in Europe in the early modern period on dynamic, interactive maps. The tool was designed by Ero Lombao Blanco during a Master's degree course in Geoinformatics of the Universidade da Coruña, under the direction of Professor Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Luaces. It was designed using the JHipster tool and was made up of three types of private interfaces (associated with the Map, Entities or the Administration), which can only be accessed

by authenticating a user.⁴⁷ Lombao points out that, for the start-up system and the configuration of the library, the user would access the application's web content from the database, via the REST server, to the client. Among the options offered by JHipster as a boot management system and library would be Gradle, which provides greater flexibility in customisation and improved boot times. PostgreSQL is the database management system used for this tool: it has no licence and need not be purchased, which is very important for a project without financial backing. Java was used as the server programming language, as it is the only JHipster option. Spring JPA, a programming application, was used to interact with the database.

On the client side, specifically in the modules called "Services", access to server functions is implemented. This is done by delegating the request construction to HttpClient Library. Components can be defined as the most basic building blocks. Each of these applications consists of a component tree. The language used to define them is called TypeScript. Each of them has an associated template defined in HTML language and may have an associated CSS language style file. The HTML language structures the content of the web page, and CSS applies the visual styles you want the interface to have. Each of the elements contained in HTML can be controlled from TypeScript, either by modifying the structure, behaviour and information they contain or by reading the information the user enters through them. The map interface, which can only be displayed in full screen for reasons of responsible design and manageability, shows the places represented through markers and represents the information flows through the connections between them. It also includes a timeline that allows the year of publication of the gazettes to be filtered within in a period ranging from 1618 to 1635.

The side panel, which contains the search filters and place types, is hidden by default. This panel is opened by clicking on the "Filter" button at the top right-hand corner of the screen. This action allows two filtering options: by type of place or by a specific place on the list. In the first case, the search results can be filtered by making up to four different combinations: the place of the event (where the news occurred), with the place of notification (where the news was written), with the place of editing (where the news was compiled and edited) or with the place of printing

47. Lombao Blanco, *Visualización de fluxos de información*.

(where the gazette was published); and, finally, the place of notification with the place of editing.

The next tab provides access, through a drop-down menu, to the interfaces associated with the Entities, which can be of four types: Publisher, Gazette, News and Place. These interfaces share the same structure, although those associated with the Gazette are the most complete and contain the most data. In this case, a Gazette entity can be created or edited by accessing a form where a number of mandatory fields can be filled in, such as the title, year, publisher, place of publication or place of editing. The last set of interfaces is that used to manage the application. The drop-down menu has two sections: one for user management and the other for consulting the metrics generated by the tool (performance statistics, memory occupied, threads running, etc.).

Despite the progress made with this work, Lombao Blanco has acknowledged that the geospatial application still presents a series of problems that need to be remedied in the future in order to optimise the user experience.⁴⁸ It cannot yet be displayed in web format because it needs to be improved. New functions are also being considered, such as the possibility of inserting places more dynamically into the map interface or loading gazette geographical data from Excel or CSV files.

Some results that have been observed with the application prototype reveal that Italy is one of the main sources of news in the corpus analysed, with Rome, Naples, Milan and Genoa standing out. Other geographical areas reported from are Bohemia, Austria, France, Germany and Moravia. Other data to be taken into account is that almost half of the news items are written in Italian cities, with Rome and Naples being the main news enclaves, followed at some distance by Milan, Genoa and Venice. Other urban centres outside Italy, from which a considerable flow of information is supplied to the network, are: Vienna, which monopolises events in Austria; Prague, which provides those related to the Bohemian Revolt; Paris, for events in France, mainly those related to the royal family and court life; and Constantinople, for events in Turkey and, to a lesser extent, in Persia. Rome is also mentioned as a place of notification in many printed documents in the corpus, but it is not the only one. Other cities supplying news are Naples, Milan, Genoa and Paris. Other recurring sites that maintain a fairly intense flow of information are Vienna, Prague, Venice and Constantinople.

48. *Ibid.*

A first approach to the provisional results that emerge from seeing these maps reveals an information network binding Europe from north to south and from east to west, with multiple nodes and in which several fundamental nuclei stand out, with Rome as the central place where many notifications are collected. Other Italian cities are important in this communication and information network, as well as the central European area, where the Thirty Years' War was taking place and many news items were being produced. Places such as Brussels, Vienna, Prague, Poland and what is now the Czech Republic provided the population with information. In addition to the high information density of Rome, the network starts in central and northern Europe and narrows like a funnel towards Italy, passing through cities such as Milan, Florence and Venice, while the seaports of Genoa in the north and Naples and Messina in the south filter news from the Mediterranean.

As time goes on, the main information focuses shift from Eastern Europe (Bohemia, Austria and Poland) to the West (Germany, France, Flanders, the Netherlands and England). Overall, a kind of information arc can be seen, stretching from Brussels to Prague and descending in a southerly direction until it ends at Rome. On the other hand, it is striking that there is little news from Spain. Italian cities, because of their geographical proximity, and Bohemia, because of the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War, are the geographical areas that provided the most news. Another result is that the information flow contains a lot of news obtained first-hand, denoting an established network of correspondents around a well-connected core: the city of Rome. As for the origin of the news, the most active news hubs within Italy were Rome, Naples and Milan, while, outside of Italy, Vienna, Paris and Prague were particularly important. Finally, the territories most frequently reported on were in Europe, mostly in Italy, but also in Bohemia, Austria, Germany, France and Hungary; outside of Europe, news from Constantinople about the Grand Turk was most important.

4. Conclusions

The study helps to map the European journalism of the early modern period, even if only partially and in a preliminary way. An attempt has therefore been made to answer the question of how printed news circulated in the complex and dynamic information market of 17th-century Europe.

The places where the information was generated and consumed, the channels through which it circulated and development over time have been taken into account. All of this has been done taking as a reference the well-known metaphor of the network, along the lines proposed by Arblaster.⁴⁹ On this issue, we also agree with Espejo Cala,⁵⁰ who described a crisscross network with innumerable points of encounter and escape and pointed out its confluence with other networks concerned with trade, geopolitics and identity.

The results of the study on news flows corroborate some of the theses Raymond and Moxham⁵¹ put forward to define the international news network that spread across Europe during the early modern period. For example, there is a global network that favours the geographical expansion of local news publishing cultures, and the way that the news reported moved freely along routes connecting different regions is observed, giving rise to pan-European communication and to such news networks. In order to operate, they required urban centres like Rome, Naples, Vienna, Prague and Paris. Dividing lines were strengthened and even generated, giving rise to different centres and peripheries. In other words, there was transnational communication despite all the borders that existed and the numerous conflicts of the age of printed material.

Authors such as Arblaster, Díaz Noci and Ettinghausen have considered the development of the European postal system as a fundamental factor in explaining the birth of the first newspapers.⁵² The GIS proposed in this study is at an early stage of development, and several challenges remain. The first challenge will be to get the web application designed by the geoinformatics specialists to work properly, as it is not yet available on the internet. The second will be to develop a tool or wizard to populate the application in an intuitive and user-friendly way so that this becomes a mechanical process that can be performed by a data input person. The third challenge will be

49. Paul Arblaster, "Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers: England in a European System of Communications", *Media History*, 11 (2005), pp. 21-36.

50. *La aparición del periodismo en Europa. Comunicación y propaganda en el Barroco*, ed. by Roger Chartier and Carmen Espejo Cala, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2012.

51. Paul Arblaster, André Belo, Carmen Espejo, Stéphane Haffemayer, Mario Infelise, Noah Moxham, Joad Raymond, Nikolaus Schobesberger, "The Lexicons of Early Modern News", in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 64-101.

52. Arblaster, "Posts, Newsletters, Newspapers"; Javier Díaz Noci, "La circulación de noticias".

to gradually populate the application with geographical data deriving from the printed news material that makes up the corpus: the periodical and semi-periodical gazettes published on the Iberian Peninsula during the 17th century. The fourth will be to host the application on a server, so it can be linked to the *Catálogo y Biblioteca Digital de Relaciones de Sucesos*. And the fifth and final challenge will consist of creating a website that allows users to visualise the news networks binding Europe in the early modern period using dynamic, interactive maps and making it possible to retrieve information.

Although initially the collaboration with geoinformatics experts has not been as fruitful as expected, we have decided to experiment and explore the possibilities offered by GIS for handling, viewing, understanding, questioning, interpreting and displaying spatially referenced data, revealing relationships, patterns and trends in the form of thematic maps. And, although much work remains to be done, it has been possible to explicitly see part of the news networks that connected the different places mentioned, answering important questions such as where the events took place or where notifications were written and edited.

After a first experimental population with a limited corpus of printed news material, the digital maps of news networks that have been developed have proven to be a reliable and effective tool applied to a specialised domain such as ours: the journalism of the early modern period. The approach makes it possible to describe, visualise and analyse the information flows generated by a specific gazette, which could be extrapolated to other periodical and semi-periodical gazettes published on the Iberian Peninsula in the 17th century and even in the rest of Europe. Thanks to these maps, it is possible to make progress in studying the historical phenomenon of news circulation in both time and space, given that, by combining analysis and visualisation in the sense proposed, chronological and cartographical tracking of the information⁵³ can be carried out from the moment the event happened until the printed material was finally published.

53. Nikolaus Schobesberger, "Mapping the *Fuggerzeitungen*: The Geographical Issues of an Information Network", in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, pp. 216-240.

Table 1. Editions of the corpus registered in the CBDRS. Source: Self-created.

No.	Title	Printer	Place	Date printed	CBDRS Code
1	GAZETA romana, y relacion general, de auifos de todos los Reynos y Prouincias del mundo.	Juan Serrano de Vargas	Seville	June 1618	0002473
2	RELACION de avisos que se saben en Roma, desde ocho de Setiembre deste año 1618 hasta hoy. En los quales se da cuenta, de como las Galeras del Papa, Malta, Florencia, y Napoles, estan aguardando al Marques de Santa Cruz con las Galeras de España; el cual en llegando, su Excelencia del Duque de Osuna partira a la determinada Empres.	Felipe May	Valencia	October/ November 1618	0004324
3	La Gazeta de Roma. En la qual vienen diferentes avisos de los passados, assi de la sangrientas guerras, como de casos muy señalados que han sucedido por diversas partes del mundo	Felipe Mey	Valencia	January 2019	0004309
4	La Gazeta de Roma, venida con este Ordinario, que llegó aquí a 7 de marzo de este año 1619.	Felipe Mey	Valencia	March 1619	0004307
5	Relación de avisos que se saben en Roma, venidos con este último Ordinario, que llegó aquí a 30 de julio, año 1619.	Felipe Mey	Valencia	July 1619	0004325
6	La Gazeta de Roma, venida con este Ordinario, que llegó aquí a los postreros de este mes de septiembre, de este año 1619.	Felipe Mey	Valencia	September 1619	0004308
7	Avisos de Roma, venidos en este último Ordinario que llegó aquí a los postreros de este mes de octubre, de este año 1619.	Felipe Mey	Valencia	October 1619	0004293

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------|
| 8 | Relación venida de Roma en este último Ordinario, que llegó a los postreros del mes de noviembre, de este año 1619. | Felipe Mey | Valencia | November 1619 | 0004350 |
| 9 | Relación venida de Roma en este último Ordinario. Que llegó aquí a los primeros de este mes de febrero del presente año 1620. | Felipe Mey | Valencia | February 1620 | 0004352 |
| 10 | Relación. Venida de Roma, en este último Ordinario. Dase cuenta cómo el Conde Palatino Hereje, Rey injusto de Bohemia, ha hecho quitar de la Iglesia de los Padres de la Compañía de Jesús... | Felipe Mey | Valencia | February-March 1620 | 0004357 |
| 11 | Relación venida de Roma. Dase cuenta de cómo el Turco ha publicado guerra contra España, y de la poderosa armada que prepara... | Felipe Mey | Valencia | March-April 1620 | 0004356 |
| 12 | Relación venida de Roma en este postrero Ordinario. Dase cuenta de cómo cogieron cien Turcos Cosarios, los cuales se habían comido a los Cautivos Cristianos, y los presentaron al Duque de Osuna | Felipe Mey | Valencia | October-November 1620 | 0004351 |
| 13 | Relación de avisos de Roma, Flandes, Sicilia, Alemania, Francia, Florencia y Argel | Juan Serrano de Vargas | Seville | 1621 | 0004034 |
| 14 | Relación de las cosas del Imperio | Francis of Lyra | Seville | May 1621 | 0006235 |
| 15 | Relación y avisos verdaderos de veynte y cinco de Junio deste año 1624. que a dado el confidente o espía secreta que ay en Constantinopla, de las cosas que pasan, así en la Asia... | Sebastian and Jaime Matevad | Barcelona | June 1624 | 0002032 |

16	Traslado de una carta en que declara todo lo sucedido en los Estados de Flandes	Juan Delgado	Madrid	October 1624	Not in CBDRS
17	Traslado de una carta en que declara todo lo sucedido en los Estados de Flandes	Sebastian and Jaime Matevad	Barcelona	October 1624	0005965
18	Traslado de una carta en que declara todo lo sucedido en los Estados de Flandes	Juan de Cabrera	Seville	November 1624	Not in CBDRS
19	Relación embiada a un personaje de esta ciudad, avisandole de algunos ordinarios que de Italia, y otras partes an venido a la Corte de su Magestad, y de la muerte de Iacobo	Juan de Cabrera	Seville	1625	Not in CBDRS
20	Famosa relación en que se avisa de cómo en una grande refriega que uvo entre la cavallería de Milán, y Ginoveses, mataron al contrario ciento y cinquenta ombres de a caballo	Juan de Cabrera	Seville	1625	0002456
21	Avisos de Génova de onze de julio de la venida del excelentísimo Duque de Feria de Alexandria de la Palla en la Señoría de Génova con veynte mil Infantes y quatro mil cavallos,	Sebastian and Jaime Matevad	Barcelona	July 1625	Not in CBDRS
22	Relacion verdadera de las vitorias y felices sucessos que ha tenido el señor Duque de Feria con los ejercitos del Duque de Saboya, en los estados de Italia	Simón Fajardo	Seville	1625	0002894
23	Relacion verdadera de las treguas y paces que el Principe de Orange, y las islas reveladas de Olanda y Gelanda tratan con la señora Infanta doña Ysabel, y del presente que aquel Principe ha hecho a su Alteza de todo el omenage de casa, y, recamara que se avia dejado en el castillo de Breda	Simón Fajardo	Seville	1625	Not in CBDRS

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| 24 | Retirada del Duque de Saboya a su Corte de Turin, y como la cavalleria polaca de el Duque de Feria, le corren la tierra hasta sus murallas, por cuyo temor, se an salido de la Corte su muger y hermana del Principe del Piamonte | Juan de Cabre-ra | Seville | 1625 | 0002625 |
| 25 | Relacion de la gran victoria que ha tenido el Emperador de Alemania contra el Rey de Di-namarca, el exercito que le ha desbaratado el Conde de Tilli su Capitan General, con muerte de dos mil cavallos, y prision de muchos gran-des de su Corte | Simón Fajardo | Seville | November 1625 | 0004855 |
| 26 | Rota qve el emperador de alemania tvvo con el general del enemigo llamado albeftad, en dina-marca. y prefa que los navios de dunquerque hizieron a los olandefes | Juan de Cabre-ra | Seville | 1626 | 0005466 |
| 27 | Verdadera relación en que se cuenta en el esta-do en el que están los católicos de Inglaterra por parte de los herejes, y con el celo que la reina los favorece. Y la grandiosa presa que las naves de Unquerque hicieron prendiendo al duque de Buquingán, y a otros muchos caballeros, los más principales de Londres, que habían salido a Holanda, y les quitaron todo cuanto llevaban | Juan de Cabre-ra | Seville | 1626 | 0006296 |
| 28 | Relacion cierta de las novedades del Reyno de Inglaterra, y su Corte, embiada por un Catolico de la Ciudad de Londres a Paris Corte del Rey de Francia | Bernardino de Guzman | Madrid | 1626 | 0001704 |

29	Relacion en que se da cuenta de las grandiosas presas que los Navios de Dumquerque (de los Estados que gobierna la Serenissima Infanta doña Isabel de la Paz) traen cada dia a sus Puertos	Juan de Cabre-ra	Seville	1626	0005464
30	Relacion de lo que ha sucedido en Alemania, Ungria, Flandes, Italia, y otras partes, desde 20. del mes de Octubre, hasta 26. De Noviembre deste presente año 1626 por avisos de Roma.	Sebastian and Jaime Matevad	Barcelona	October-November 1627	0000840
31	Vitoria que el Marques de Espinola a tenido en Inglaterra entrando, y saqueando la isla de Lycuria, y cogido en ella gran cantidad de ga-nado, y otras cosas	Juan de Cabre-ra	Seville	1627	0004149
32	Nuevas ciertas y fidedignas de la Vitoria que ha alcançado Don Fadrique de Toledo General de la Armada del Catolico Rey de España nuestro Señor, de ochenta y siete Vaxeles de Olandeses en la Isla de San Christoval cerca de la Auana, con otras nuevas dignas de ser sabidas	Esteban Liberos	Barcelona	December 1629	0004570
33	Vitoria que el exercito de el Emperador de Ale-mania tuvo en la entrada de la Bartolina	Juan de Cabre-ra	Seville	1629	Not in CBDRS
34	Vitoria famosa que a tenido el exercito de el Rey nuestro señor sobre las Islas reveladas de Olanda, y la gente q' les ha muerto, y fuertes que les à cogido, y despojos q' hallaron en el saqueo de la Villa de Huçen, y otras facciones	Juan de Cabre-ra	Seville	August 1629	Not in CBDRS

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| 35 | Carta embiada de Flandes a un cavallero desta ciudad, en la qual se refiere una famosa vitoria que el Rey de Ungria, y Galaço han tenido con-tra los Franceses el mes de Setiembre pasado, y otro buen sucesso de su Alteza en Flandes | Sebastian and Jaime Matevad | Barcelona | September 1635 | Not in CBDRS |
| 36 | Nueva, y verdadera relacion de avisos llegados a la muy illustre, y noble ciudad de Roma, des-de treynta de Iulio hasta veynte y siete de Agos-to deste año 1635 y agora nueuamente en Bar-celona por la Gazeta. Contiene felices discursos, vitorias contra Franceses, y otros enemigos de la Magestad Cesarea de Felipe IIII. que Dios nos mantenga, con vn grandioso milagro que mos-trò la Virgen santa de Loreto en la ciudad de Espoleti, en comemoracion de semejantes, y otras vitorias que se sirue conceder tan a menu-do a sus fieles | Gabriel Nogues | Barcelona | July-August 1635 | 0004516 |
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Contributors

BEATRIZ ÁLVAREZ GARCÍA holds a PhD in History from the Complutense University of Madrid (2020). She is currently a Margarita Salas postdoctoral fellow at the Complutense University of Madrid and the University of Naples Federico II, where she is part of the ERC project *DisComPoSE: Disasters, Communication and Politics in Southwestern Europe*. She was previously a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Naples Federico II. She is also a researcher at the Fundación Carlos de Amberes (Madrid) and a member of the research project *POLEMHIS. Comunicación política, gestión de la información y memoria de los conflictos en la Monarquía Hispánica*.

SARA CAREDDA is Assistant Professor at both the University of Barcelona and the Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona), where she teaches Renaissance and Baroque Art and Cultural Heritage. She studied Art History at the University of Cagliari and did her PhD at the University of Barcelona (2016) focusing on the artistic patronage of the Spanish bishops and viceroys in Sardinia (17th-18th centuries). Her research interests cover a large spectrum of topics, from cultural exchanges between Italy and Spain in the early modern period to Catholic art and iconography in the Counter-Reformation period.

DOMENICO CECERE is Associate Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Naples Federico II. His research focuses on popular politics and social conflicts, on integration and mobility in early modern Naples, and on perceptions of and reactions to disasters in the Spanish Empire. From 2018 he has coordinated the research group *DisComPoSE: Disasters, Communication and Politics in Southwestern Europe*, funded by the ERC. His publications include the monograph *Le armi del popolo. Conflitti politici e strategie di resistenza nella Calabria del Settecento* (EdiPuglia, 2013) and the collective volumes *Disaster Narratives in Early Modern Naples: Politics, Communication and Culture* (Viella, 2018) and *Rischio, catastrofe e gestione dell'emergenza nel Mediterraneo occidentale e in Ispanoamerica in età moderna: omaggio a Jean-Philippe Luis* (Universidad de Alicante – fedOA Press, 2022).

RAMON DILLA MARTÍ (PhD) is Assistant Professor in the Department of Art History from the University of Barcelona. He has published several studies on Dominican, Franciscan and Mercedarian iconography and Catholic martyrs and devotions. Recently, he coordinated the catalogue of paintings from the Museo del Prado that are on permanent loan at the University of Barcelona with Professor Sílvia Canalda (PhD), and his last monograph, written with Sara Caredda (PhD), analysed the iconography and cult of Salvador d'Horta, a Franciscan Catalan saint who lived in the 16th century.

VALERIA ENEA graduated from the University of Palermo and holds a PhD in Historical, Archaeological and Historical-Artistic Sciences from the University of Naples Federico II (2022). Within the ERC project *DisComPoSE*, she has conducted research on the management of emergencies and the development of institutional responses to natural disasters in the Kingdoms of Naples and of Sicily in the 17th century.

MAITE IRACEBURU JIMÉNEZ holds a degree in both Spanish Studies (Universidad de Navarra, End of Year Extraordinary Prize, 2012) and English Studies (UNED 2016), and a PhD in Arts and Humanities from the Universidad de Navarra (2017). Her dissertation won the prize for the best thesis at the Universidad de Navarra (2017). She now works at the Università degli Studi di Siena, where she teaches Spanish translation. Her publications include her book *Estudio pragmadiscursivo de las relaciones de sucesos (siglo XVII)* (Universidade da Coruña - SIELAE, 2018) and the articles “La concepción de la mujer a través del léxico en las relaciones de sucesos en verso” (*Hipogrifo Revista de Literatura y Cultura del Siglo de Oro*, 2021) and “Tras la huella de la lengua italiana en el léxico de las relaciones de sucesos (siglo XVII)” (*Melior Auro*”, 2020), among others.

JUAN MANUEL LUNA CRUZ is a collaborating researcher with the HICPAN research group (Critical History of Andalusian Journalism). He holds a degree in Journalism from the University of Seville and a Master's degree in Political and Institutional Communication from the University of Santiago de Compostela. He currently works at the ABC newspaper in Seville.

ANNACHIARA MONACO is a postdoctoral researcher in the History of Italian Language at the University of Naples Federico II. As a member of the ERC project *DisComPoSE*, she is currently investigating the linguistic representation of natural disasters in popular printed texts, with a particular focus on the 1631 eruption of Vesuvius. Her research interests also include Italian vernacular historical writings and 20th-century literature.

JOSÉ A. ORTIZ holds a PhD in Art History from the University of Barcelona, where he also obtained a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Cultural Heritage Management. His field of research is the visual culture of death and illness between the 16th and 19th centuries. Currently, he works as a lecturer at the University of Barcelona and the Autonomous University of Barcelona and serves as an art consultant. His last book was published in 2022 by the Spanish publisher Temporal under the title *Pintar la Muerte. Cuadros para despedirme de mi padre*.

MARCO PAPASIDERO is a postdoctoral researcher in the ERC project NeMoSanctI. In 2017 he had a fellowship at the General Archive of the Carmelite Order. He received the 2018 Sangalli Institute Award for Religious History for his PhD thesis, which was published by the Firenze University Press in 2019 with the title *Translatio sanctitatis. I furti di reliquie nell'Italia medievale*. He also authored the volumes "*A laudi Deu*". *Luigi Rabatà tra storia, memoria e pratiche devozionali* (Edizioni Carmelitane, 2019) and *Miracula et Benefitia. Malattia, taumaturgia e devozione a Licata e in Sicilia nella prima età moderna* (Edizioni Carmelitane, 2021). In October 2022, he was Research Fellow at the Edward Worth Library in Dublin.

ANTONIO PERRONE holds a PhD in Philology (Federico II – Naples) and in Études Italiennes (Paris 8 – Saint Denis). He is a postdoctoral researcher and a lecturer of Italian Literature at the University Federico II. He deals with lyric poetry in the early modern period and has published a number of works: "Fictio e realtà nella lirica barocca", *Griselda* (2021); *La scelta di poesie nell'incendio del Vesuvio* (Rubbettino, 2021); *Poesie d'amore e d'altri disastri* (Carocci, 2021); "La poésie des désastres entre science et religion", *Laboratoire Italien* (2023); *Il palinsesto della catastrofe: La metafora tra lirica e scienza nel Barocco meridionale* (ESL, 2023).

GENNARO SCHIANO is a Researcher of Spanish Literature at the University of Naples Federico II. His research interests focus on popular informational genres and their relationship with cultured literature, in particular on the representation of catastrophes in the *relaciones de sucesos* published in the territories of the Hispanic Empire, a topic of his monograph *Relatar la catástrofe en el Siglo de Oro. Entre noticia y narración* (Peter Lang, 2021). He also deals with Renaissance dialogue and bucolic literature in the *siglo de oro*.

FLAVIA TUDINI holds a PhD with merit from the University of Trento (2019). Her research topics relate to the circulation of information for the governance of territories in the Spanish Monarchy and the power dynamics between the

ecclesiastical and temporal spheres in the viceroyalty of Peru (16th-17th centuries). She has held postdoctoral positions at several institutions: Deutsches Historisches Institut in Rome (2020), Istituto Italiano di Studi Storici in Naples (2021), and the University of Turin (2021-2022). She is currently an archivist at the John Paul I Vatican Foundation and holds a teaching contract at Roma Tre University.

GENNARO VARRIALE obtained a PhD in History from the University of Genoa and the University de Valencia, studying the role of the Kingdom of Naples in Habsburg intelligence against the Ottoman Empire. He has published several academic articles and monographs on communication and espionage in the early modern period. He was recently awarded a María Zambrano fellowship at the University of Valencia with the project *Informar de la plaga. La Monarquía Hispánica frente a la peste en el Mediterráneo moderno (INFOPLA)*. As part of the *DisComPoSE* project, he has focused on the circulation of news on disasters (16th-17th centuries) and is preparing a monograph on confidential news about earthquakes in the Hispanic Monarchy.

MILENA VICECONTE obtained a PhD in History of Art in 2013, a joint degree between the University of Naples Federico II and the Universitat de Barcelona. She took part in several research groups within the University of Barcelona, focused on artistic circulation between Italy and Spain in the early modern period. From 2018 she has been a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Naples Federico II in the framework of the *DisComPoSE* project, within which she deals with issues related to the imageries of disasters in the territories of the Spanish Monarchy through the analysis of figurative sources (16th-18th centuries).

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