

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

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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.

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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 Catedra 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 conflictada 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 noticiario* 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 heterogeneous 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 Júlia 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 preciosas, 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 inmaculista*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 noticiara*. 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.

