



DisComPoSE - Disasters, Communication and Politics in Southwestern Europe*

Report of the seminar series *Heroic figures in calamitous times.
Saints and institutions in the representation of disasters (16th-18th centuries)*

14th-15th and 21st-22nd January 2021

On the Google Meet platform



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INTRODUCTION

The current incidence of natural disasters has stimulated, especially in recent decades, a lively debate among academics from different disciplines about the cultural and social connotations of catastrophes. Earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, and fires are studied as social events, which provide a photographic negative relevant to the culture and imagination of a historical period.

In the Early Modern Age, the natural disasters that occurred in the territories of the Spanish monarchy determined the publication of different kinds of texts - treatises, reports, newssheets, chronicles and poems - that circulated immediately after the event, inside and outside the borders of the empire. These texts, although heterogeneous, contributed to the creation and diffusion of recurring *topoi*, and of shared stylistic and rhetorical elements. In contrast to other news about the exploits of the leaders in battle, the magnificent entrances into the city of princes and governors, or the mythical births and deaths of royals, the narratives about disasters seem to lack protagonists, who are replaced by the anthropomorphic fury of natural elements. However, sometimes in the narration of a natural disaster, in the indistinct mass of people and their dramatic anecdotes, individual characters appear, whose actions transform the state of emergency: on the one hand, saints, on the other, local institutions. The first are invoked to mediate with the heavens and to appease the divine anger with miraculous events; and the second appealed to manage the tragedy with extraordinary actions and measures.

The four day seminar organized by the DisComPoSE group on 14th, 15th, 21st and 22nd January aimed to focus on these particular heroes of emergency and on the different interpretive scenarios that underlie the memory of their actions: from the common rhetorical structures used by the different editorial genres that report on these events to the relationship of these genres with the stylistic elements of epic and contemporary poetry, from the figurative representations of heroic action to the recycling and adaptation of these representations in other contexts of crisis, from the conflict between contradictory narratives to the political reasons for this conflict, from the characteristic image of the processions to the intersection of the competences and powers of different institutions that are manifested during these events.

166 researchers took part in the conference: 57 on the first day, 38 on the second, 39 on the third, and 32 on the fourth.



Giovedì 14 gennaio 2021

15.00-16.00

Saluti istituzionali

Andrea Mazzucchi (direttore DSU - Università di Napoli Federico II)

Introduzione ai lavori

Domenico Cecere, Gennaro Schiano, Milena Viceconte

Lectio Magistralis

Françoise Lavocat (Université Paris 3)

16.00-18.30

Sessione 1

Forme e topoi dell'azione eroica: santi, popoli, istituzioni

Eva Belén Carro Carbajal (Museo Etnográfico de Castilla y León & IEMYRhD)

"En pago deste dolor": santos y desastres naturales en la literatura popular impresa

Gennaro Schiano (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

"Tu sola siempre nuestro amparo has sido": l'invocazione alla Vergine nel Llanto de Menardo di Duarte Núñez de Acosta

Antonio Perrone (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

La retorica dell'eroe nella lirica dei disastri

Discussant:

Flavia Gherardi (Università di Napoli Federico II)

Valentina Nider (Università di Trento)

Thursday 14th January 2021

Lectio Magistralis by Françoise Lavocat (Université Paris 3)

Heroes and saints of the plague

Through an analysis of some Italian texts on the plague, such as the treatise *Medicina filosofica contro la peste* written by Lorenzo Condio and published in Lyon in 1581, Prof. Lavocat has investigated the use of the vocabulary of war, with expressions inspired by the world of chivalry coming from heroic epic poetry. This trend is also prominent in eighteenth-century texts, such as *Il Governo de la peste, e delle maniere di guardarsene diviso in politico, medico e ecclesiastico* written by Ludovico Muratori and published in Modena in 1714.

In the artistic field, religious heroic figures, rather than secular ones, prevail in the images produced in both France and Italy. From surveys carried out, in fact, we can note a preponderance of paintings depicting saints, in particular, the martyrs Saint Sebastian and Saint Roch, showing their respective wounds or presenting them in the act of helping people with the plague. We can also often find the figure of Saint Charles Borromeo, or of other patron saints represented while looking down on the city, such as Saint Gennaro in Naples and Saint Rosalia in Palermo. During the eighteenth century, a gradual removal of the divine presence can be noticed in the French artistic tradition, as evidenced by such paintings as *Le Chevalier Rose, intendant de la santé, à la Tourette* by Jean-François de Troy, or that by Antoine Jean Gros, *Le Général Bonaparte en visitant les pestiférés dans l'hôpital de Jaffa*.



Session 1 - Forms and *topoi* of heroic action: saints, peoples, institutions

Discussants:

Flavia Gherardi (Università di Napoli Federico II)

Valentina Nider (Università di Trento)

Eva Belén Carro Carbajal (Museo Etnográfico de Castilla y León & IEMYRhD)

“En pago deste dolor”: Saints and Natural Disasters in Popular Printed Literature

This intervention focused on the narration of natural disasters in popular literature in verse. After analyzing the rhetorical structure and the so-called “relaciones de sucesos”, the scholar has spoken about the audience for this publication and about its use in different contexts. Among the examples reported, in which the figure of the saint appears as an intercessor and mediator in the face of different disasters, she focused on the description of a news-sheet relating to an earthquake that occurred in the Valencian town of Alcoy in 1620.

Gennaro Schiano (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

“Tu sola siempre nuestro amparo has sido”: invocation to the Virgin in Duarte Núñez de Acosta’s Llanto de Menardo

The flood of the Tormes river, which hit the city of Salamanca on 26th and 27th January 1626, took on the characteristics of a tragic catastrophe, not only because this irreversibly changed the face of the city, which was rebuilt after the disaster with considerable urban modifications, but also because this flood received unprecedented media attention. In fact, during the period of maximum diffusion of *noticieros*, several texts - having composite literary and editorial identity - reconstructed the event that had occurred during the night of San Policarpo with heterogeneous rhetorical figures and styles.

For example, the only printed copy that we have in our archives is presented as a “relación” – as it is written in the subtitle in the frontispiece This is the *Llanto de Menardo* by Duarte Núñez de Acosta, which represents the flood of Salamanca through a young shepherd

crying, and this document, therefore, has the features of a bucolic song. The choice of narrating *in octavas reales* - typical, as is well known, of *relaciones* that aim to shine "*por extremo*" - reveals the literary ambitions of the Portuguese-born doctor. He was a graduate of the University of Salamanca and had cultivated a great passion for literature in the course of his career, from his youth and before his Latin production, the only works explored in Luis Charlo Brea's studies. These ambitions are also confirmed by the structure of the poem and the particular re-elaboration of the *noticiero* material. In the first nineteen stanzas, following a chronotope often present in the *relaciones* on this event, the text describes the damage caused by the fury of the river and the various buildings swept away by the overflow. In the central part, the narrative shifts to the "zagal de ingenio escaso" and his inconsolable and furious lament directed at Tormes and his "estigias olas", responsible for his and the whole city's pain. At the sight of the prodigious apparition of a statue of the Virgin, miraculously saved from the raging waters, the young shepherd launches into a dramatic invocation with which, certain of obtaining divine intervention, he puts an end to his weeping.

Starting from the first provisional results of Schiano's work of editing the text, he analyzed the last thirteen octaves of the poem, highlighting how Núñez de Acosta declines the formula of the invocation-request, a *topos* of the classical world and of religious imagery, representing the prodigious and heroic action of the Virgin. The reference to well-known episodes in the biblical tradition allows Menardo to trust in the salvific mediation of the Madonna who, like the miraculous statue that escaped the fury of the waters, will know how to be a new "Saint Elmo" in that "vil tormenta".



Antonio Perrone (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE) *The rhetoric of the hero in the lyric of disasters*

Through several examples of celebratory poems with a theme of catastrophe, Perrone focused on the way of representing disaster in the Baroque poetry of southern Italy. He also illustrated how the action of historical or mythical figures aimed to resolve seemingly unstoppable events.

He analyzed two sonnets by Antonio de' Rossi on the Masaniello revolution of 1647, a sonnet by Tommaso Gaudiosi on the miracle of San Gennaro, two sonnets by Biagio Cusano on the same subject, and an ode by Giacomo Lubrano on the epidemic of plague which had broken out in the Spanish Viceroyalty of Naples in 1656. These texts reveal two fundamental characteristics of the representation of disaster in lyric poetry: the first is the



process of 'medialization', which the Viceroyalty culture of the seventeenth century operated towards the Spanish crown and local institutions; the second is the strong stereotypical level of the narrative of catastrophe.

Through the analysis of these poems, Perrone demonstrated the existing connection between different types of catastrophes in the collective imagination of the seventeenth century, and explained how a media tool (lyric poetry in the Baroque age) can manipulate the data of reality to the achievement of political goals.



Venerdì 15 gennaio 2021

15.00-18.00

Sessione 2

Quando l'eroe fa notizia. L'informazione sui disastri naturali

Maite Iraceburu Jiménez (Università degli Studi di Siena)

"La mano de Dios" en las relaciones de sucesos de desastres naturales: estrategias léxico-discursivas

Flavia Tudini (Istituto Italiano degli Studi Storici)

La narrazione del terremoto di Lima del 1687. Istituzioni e devozioni di fronte alla catastrofe

Juan Manuel Luna Cruz (Universidad de Sevilla)

Mapas Digitales y redes de información en la Edad Moderna: algunos casos sobre desastres y héroes

Discussant:

Francisco Baena Sánchez (Universidad de Sevilla)

Nieves Pena Sueiro (Universidade da Coruña)

Friday 15th January 2021

Session 2 - When the hero makes the news. Information on natural disasters

Discussant:

Francisco Baena Sánchez (Universidad de Sevilla)

Nieves Pena Sueiro (Universidade da Coruña)

Maite Iraceburu Jiménez (Università degli Studi di Siena)

"La mano de Dios" in relaciones de sucesos about natural disasters: lexical-discursive strategies

Prof. Jiménez analyzed the presence of God in *relaciones de sucesos* about natural disasters in the Spanish language, through the different lexical-discursive strategies carried out by the authors of these printed sources who are often unknown.

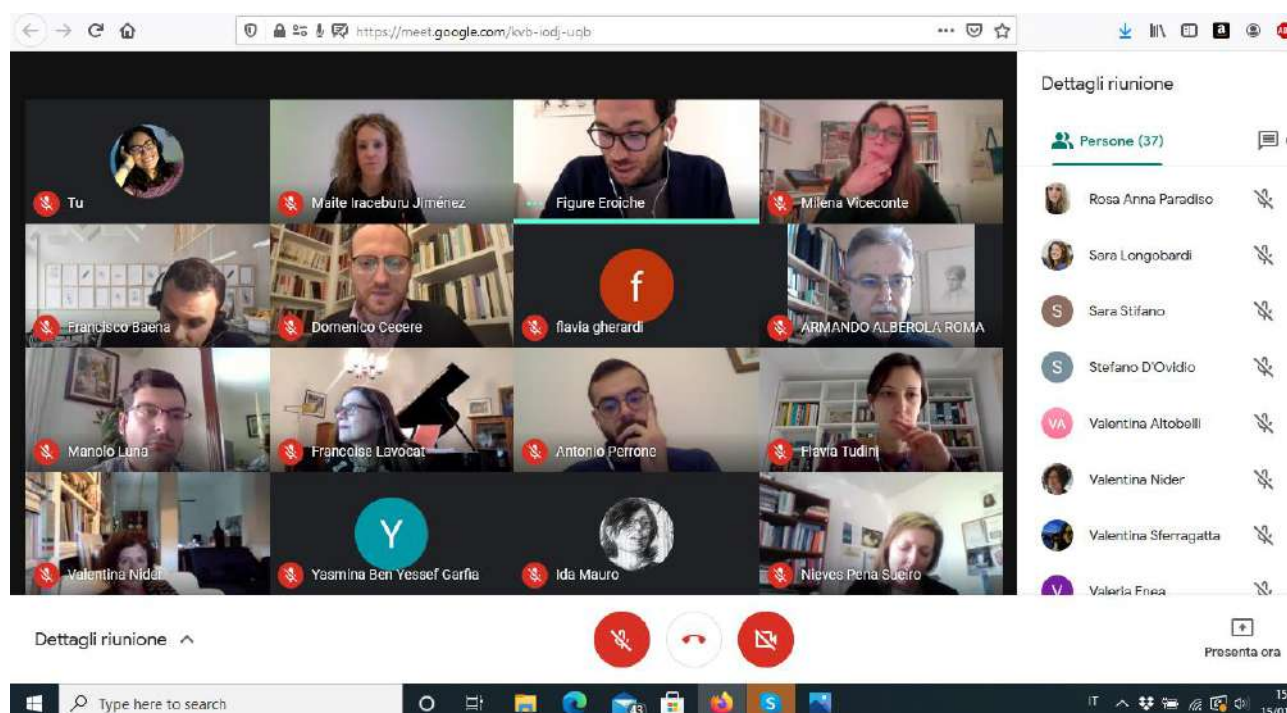
By selecting an *ad hoc* corpus, the scholar showed how divine intervention gave a reason for being, while at the same time protecting the faithful against natural disasters, such as earthquakes, floods or fires. These unfortunate events were disseminated throughout the European territories by these antecedents of the press, the *relaciones de sucesos*, not only in order to publicize such misfortunes, but also in order to explain their ultimate cause (the sins of men) to the most avid and curious readers and listeners.

The analysis of the lexical-discursive strategies used in the texts mentioned reveals that the authors of these documents seem to follow their own discursive model, that of the discursive tradition of the *relaciones de sucesos*. This phenomenon, undoubtedly, expedited the writing of these texts, which were characterized by a strong imprint of the Church, in addition to expressing the need to recount and disseminate the narrative of these recent disasters from a strictly confessional point of view.

The use of different comparisons and appeals to God, as well as the reiteration of certain fixed identifying expressions of a specific type of discourse (that of the *relaciones* of natural catastrophes) reveals the strong social and cultural connotation of natural disasters at that time.

On the other hand, the lexical-discursive analysis of the selected *relaciones* emphasizes the relevance of the sometimes unnoticed translation work carried out by unknown translators, thanks to whose work the *relaciones de sucesos* could be widely disseminated in the Old Continent.

Thus, by means of linguistic strategies that introduced "the hand of God" in the *relaciones de sucesos*, it was possible to convince the popular audience of the responsibility of their sins in the face of such misfortunes sent from heaven.



Flavia Tudini (Istituto Italiano degli Studi Storici)

The narration of the 1687 Lima earthquake. Institutions and devotions against the catastrophe

On 20th October 1687, a strong earthquake struck the city of Lima. The population escaped their homes; the viceroy was forced to take refuge with his family in the Plaza Mayor, while the archbishop risked his own life due to the collapse of the house where he had been hosted during his visit to the port of Callao.

The immediate reactions to this scenario of destruction were of a religious-devotional nature: the earthquake had originated from divine wrath and, therefore, the city should be purified through collective rites of sincere repentance. The religiousness and popular devotion were manifested in numerous processions of those images of the saints, the Virgin and Christ who had resisted the earthquakes, becoming patrons and protectors from future disasters. Among these images, the one that assumed the greatest symbolic meaning was that of "Cristo de los Milagros" or "Cristo de los Temblores".

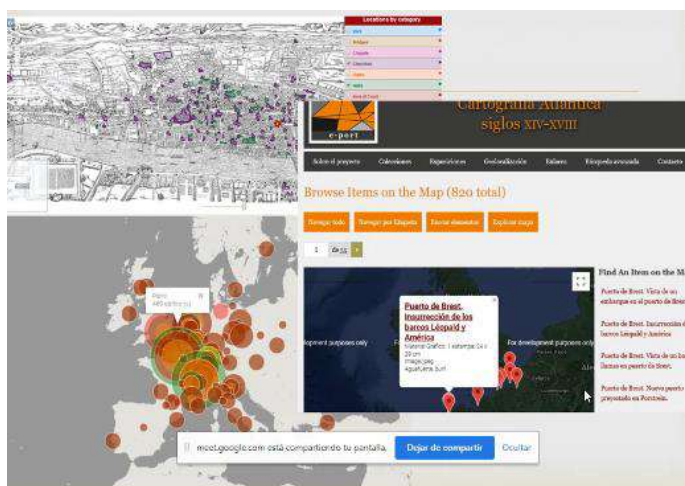
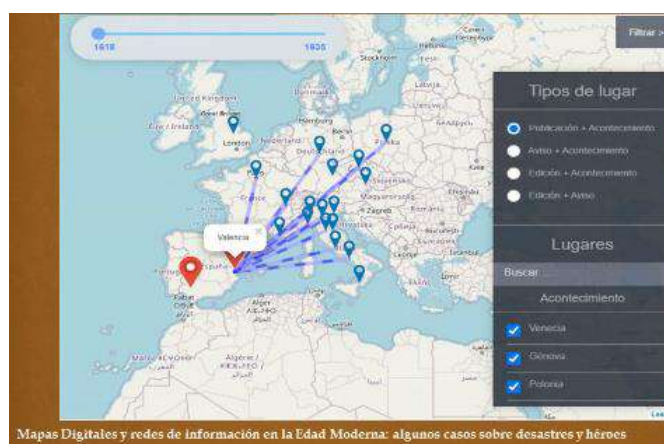
Painted as a fresco by a slave, it resisted the destruction of the church during both the earthquake of 1655 and that of 1687, becoming the protector from earthquakes. The image was copied on an oil canvas, which was carried in procession several times during the earthquake of 1687.

Prof. Tudini analyzed, in a comparative perspective, the news sent by the viceroy and the archbishop of Lima to the Court regarding the earthquake, the effective action of the institutions and the devotions disseminated among the population and encouraged by the archbishop. The heroic figure of the viceroy in the face of the catastrophe and the search for an otherworldly hero, identified in the Cristo de los Milagros, were also emphasized.

Juan Manuel Luna Cruz (Universidad de Sevilla)

Digital Maps and Information Networks in the Modern Age: Some Cases of Disasters and Heroes

In recent years, various historians have used the metaphor of the network to refer to journalism in the Modern Age, a European-wide network that urgently needs to be superimposed on a map. Prof. Luna Cruz focused on the dissemination of news in the seventeenth century (specifically, from 1618 to 1635) and the possibilities that cartographic representation systems or dynamic maps offer for its representation through the observation and analysis of flows of communication and information in the production of *relaciones de sucesos*.



Natural disasters appear in documents such as reports of events or gazettes of the time and, although they do not have the protagonism of battles, coronations of kings or invasions from one State to another, we have several cases to analyze and place in European communication networks, as well as in the dynamic maps of Luna Cruz's study.

Other important aspects of his investigation were, first, to observe the zones of Europe with additional details about the places where news was produced, and to explain why these

territories and not others are those that occupy so much information in the *relaciones* of the seventeenth century. Secondly, to extract information through cartographic representations on the communications of that time, observing the dynamic maps and mapping on them the possible routes that the information would take. In recent years, digital platforms and geolocation programs have begun to be used to visualize communications, tours of event warnings or areas where more information was produced, that was later reflected in printed documents. Apart from the bibliography and the documentary analysis of the *relaciones de*



sucesos or gazettes from 1618 to 1635, both for the theoretical section and the context, the project used free and open software in collaboration with departments of university centers of geospatial information. Ideally, this map will show how news circulated in the complex and dynamic information market of 17th century Europe.



Giovedì 21 gennaio 2021

15.00-18.00

Sessione 3

Gesti e sguardi eroici. Per un'iconografia dell'azione miracolosa

Sara Caredda e Ramon Dilla Martí (Universitat de Barcelona)

La Madonna di Bonaria, heroína celestial contra tempestades y desastre marinos entre el Atlántico y el Mediterráneo

Milena Viceconte (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

Eroi secolari del disastro. La figura del viceré e delle autorità municipali nelle fonti figurative napoletane e spagnole

José A. Ortiz (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

Devoción y epidemia. La vigencia de San Vicente Ferrer ante los brotes pestilentes

Discussant:

Stefano D'Ovidio (Università di Napoli Federico II)

Francisco Montes González (Universidad de Sevilla)

Thursday 21st January 2021

Session 3 - Heroic gestures and looks. For an iconography of the miraculous action

Discussants:

Stefano D'Ovidio (Università di Napoli Federico II)

Francisco Montes González (Universidad de Sevilla)

Sara Caredda and Ramon Dilla Martí (Universitat de Barcelona)

The Madonna of Bonaria, a heavenly heroine against storms and marine disasters in the Atlantic and Mediterranean

The territorial expansion of the Crown of Aragon during the 14th and 15th centuries was accompanied by an intensification of maritime navigation, especially between the cities of the Levantine coast of the Iberian Peninsula, such as Barcelona and Valencia, and the large Italian ports that came under the control of the Aragonese monarchs, such as Palermo, Naples and Cagliari. This increase in port activity populated the Mediterranean waters with ships, galleys and boats, manned by an increasingly specialized crew, who were exposed to inclement weather, and could often be struck by violent storms that threatened the integrity of the ships, and their own lives.

The rigors imposed by maritime life and the constant dangers of a sea whipped up by strong winds and deep currents, prompted the creation of numerous sanctuaries of the Virgin Mary along the Mediterranean coast. One of the most widespread cults during the modern times among navigators was that of the Madonna di Bonaria, whose sanctuary close to Cagliari was donated by Alfonso IV of Aragón to the Order of Mercy in 1335, a decade after his conquest of the city (1324). The effective intercession of this Virgin during the 15th and 16th centuries was accompanied by a wide expansion of her cult, which was firmly established not only among Sardinian sailors and merchants, but also in the Iberian Peninsula,



especially in the city of Seville. From there it crossed the Atlantic, giving rise to the name of one of the newly founded cities in Latin America: Buenos Aires. The success of this devotion led to the opening of a canonical process in 1592. The researchers Caredda and Dilla Martí presented testimonies of the various maritime catastrophes that involved both military and civil vessels and that were remedied thanks to the invocation of this true heavenly heroine. They also focused on the analysis of the various iconographic representations of the Virgin herself, and especially of the very numerous votive paintings.

Milena Viceconte (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

Secular heroes of the disaster. The figure of the viceroy and the municipal authorities in Neapolitan and Spanish figurative sources

In the visual representation of the disasters that occurred in the different territories of the Spanish Monarchy, a predominant role was assumed by the saints who, as intermediaries between the earth and the sky, were invoked by devotees through public orations, thus contributing to the cessation of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods and epidemics. These saints are often represented in the act of interacting directly with the elements of nature, a choice that is aimed at highlighting their quality as heroic agents of the local community, which, as a sign of gratitude, consecrates them as patrons of the city. The best-



known example, at least in the Neapolitan viceregal context, is that of San Gennaro, who is the protagonist of numerous figurative sources that portray him on a cloud as he clashes with the threatening Vesuvius in eruption.

However, in the context of images of disaster, some of these also include the intervention of other virtuous actors: figures belonging to the earthly world who, together with the divine ones, claim an essential role in resolving the calamity. The presence of the viceroy and the members of the Municipality in the foreground and in the lower half of

the scene (the one dedicated to the earthly dimension) delivers a clear political message: to pass on to the future memory the idea that their action was also fundamental for the restoration of order.

The researchers presented pictorial and printed representations of the Neapolitan and Spanish context, and dedicated to events of disaster, mostly those in which there are present secular authorities. The iconographic analysis was compared with documentary attestations about the role these authorities played in the actual management of the event, with the aim of understanding the aspects underlying the visual exaltation of these characters celebrated as heroes of the disaster.

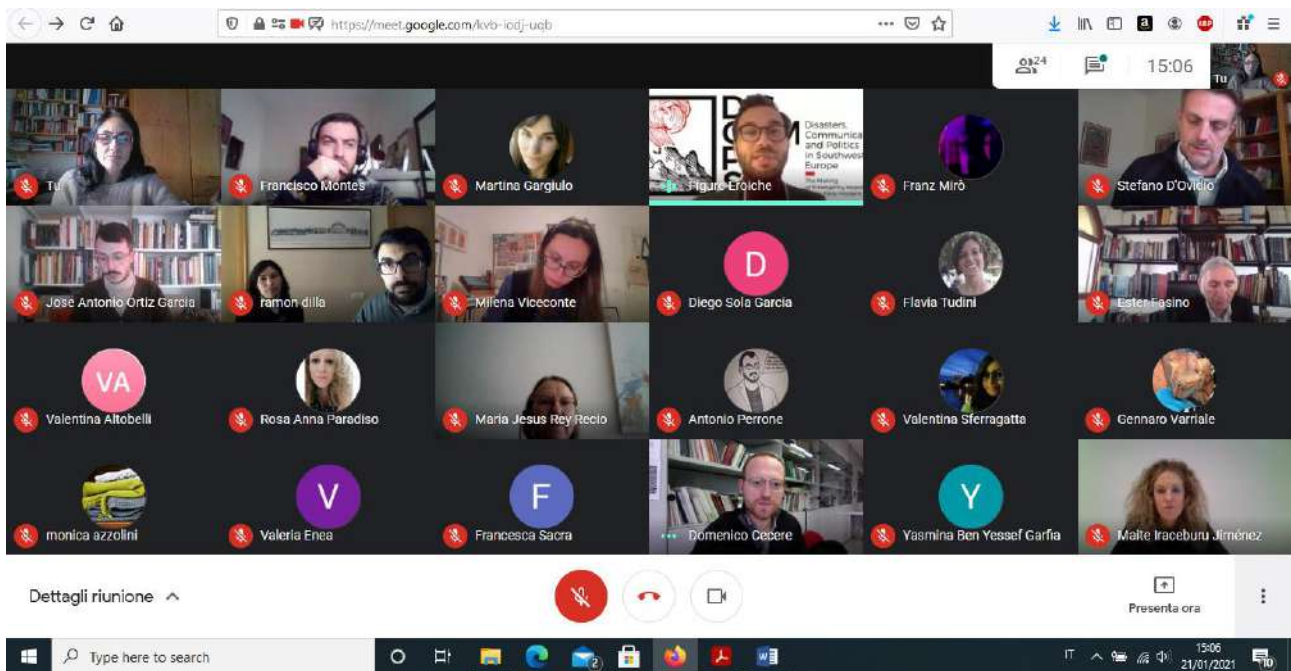
José A. Ortiz (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

Devotion and epidemic. The validity of San Vicente Ferrer before the outbreaks of plague

The scholar analyzed the figure of San Vicente Ferrer (1350-1419), canonized in 1455, as an intercessor against pestilence. His hagiography and defense of his sanctity took into account numerous miracles of healing and intercession in times of outbreaks of plague. Texts relating to the process of his canonization and numerous publications, such as treatises or reports of events, refer not only to his preaching work, but also to the miraculous cures and resurrections.

Through the analysis of some representations, Prof. Ortiz first proposed an approach to the iconography of the Dominican saint as a thaumaturge, through works from the 15th century, devotional engravings, tapestries and chapels from the 17th century, ceramic panels from the 18th century and memories of his sanctity in paintings by Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923). Particular importance was given to the devotion of the saint in the Valencian territory. Here, there is a special veneration of the relic of the saint's quill obtained by Archbishop Juan de Ribera (1532-1611) in his native house. This was linked with the popular traditions of healing of the saint in times of epidemic, such as that of cholera that took place in 1854, or the full validity of his intercession in the face of new epidemic outbreaks such as that in 2020 associated with the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, COVID-19.

Finally, he offered an iconographic overview of the subject, providing documentary references and visual works of a varied chronology which allow a broad perspective of the local implementation of the devotion and its presence in society and in Valencian traditions to the present day. Investigating the evocation of the saint, patron of the Valencian Community, during the recent epidemic allows us to approach, from a historical, artistic, anthropological and social point of view, the importance of beliefs that transcend time and permeate certain aspects of culture.



Final remarks by Gerhard Wolf (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence)

Several aspects were mentioned in the concluding speech by director Wolf. First of all, he greatly appreciated the presentations of the other scholars and their attempts to investigate certain devotional practices over the long term, with an analysis of both the constant and changing aspects of each context. This approach is also effective in the case of a disaster not considered by the other speakers, but very important in modern history, namely the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, which led to a revival and adaptation of religious images. This case demonstrates how strong the power of imagery was, which was preserved even after the concept of divine punishment had been overcome and new scientific theories were able to explain the disaster as a natural phenomenon.

Another interesting aspect is the flexibility and mobility of the images, not only during processions, but as icons (this is linked to Montes' remarks regarding the concept of a double simulacrum). The images are projected in a transnational context; they are the object of dynamics, more or less directly, and they form interreligious connections, chains of sacred images that shape the history of devotions.

Finally, he highlighted how images are deeply connected with the search for collective identity, in the colonial but also global context, referring to the example of Mexico, where the cult of the Madonna of Guadalupe was extended to the whole national territory as an icon of the Mexican people.



Venerdì 22 gennaio 2021

15.00-18.00

Sessione 4

“In atto d’implorare la Divina Clemenza”.

L’intervento dei santi patroni contro la catastrofe

Beatriz Álvarez García (Universidad Complutense de Madrid y F. Carlos de Amberes)

Manifestaciones religiosas ante las inundaciones del Guadalquivir en el siglo XVI

Gennaro Varriale (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

“Tantos y tan admirables prodigios a obrado en esta ciudad”. L’intervento dei santi durante i disastri naturali della Monarchia Ispanica (sec. XVI-XVII)

Valeria Enea (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

A che santo votarsi. Culti e devozioni a Palermo dopo il terremoto del 1693

Discussant:

Domenico Cecere (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

Pasquale Palmieri (Università di Napoli Federico II)

Friday 22 January 2021

Session 4 - “In atto d’implorare la Divina Clemenza”. The intervention of patron saints against the catastrophe

Discussants:

Domenico Cecere (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

Pasquale Palmieri (Università di Napoli Federico II)

Beatriz Álvarez García (Universidad Complutense de Madrid y F. Carlos de Amberes)

Religious demonstrations before the floods of the Guadalquivir in the seventeenth century

Prof. Álvarez García analyzed the response of the religious institutions of Seville to the floods of the Guadalquivir River during the 17th century. Throughout this century, at least twelve floods of considerable magnitude occurred in the city, overflowing from the riverbanks. The status of Seville as an economic nucleus, an important commercial city of the Iberian Peninsula and a port of entry and exit to the Indies, depended to a large extent on its fluvial activity. Therefore, any natural catastrophe related to the Guadalquivir necessarily turned into an event with economic, social, religious, political, urban and cultural implications which mobilized the entire population and, especially, the local authorities, both civil or religious.

The scholar stressed the reaction of Seville's religious institutions, among which the city council and church stand out, but also others, such as convents and monasteries, from the point of view of resource mobilization and the organization of public events - such as masses, processions and prayers *pro serenitate* - and from the perspective of the representation given by the authorities.

The study of processions and public events allows an analysis of the social and religious representations and the impact of these events on the urban memory of the city. In order to carry out this study, she focused on *relaciones de sucesos* and contemporary sources, compared with testimonies from other territories.

Gennaro Varriale (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

“Tantos y tan admirables prodigios a obrado en esta ciudad”. The intervention of the saints during the natural disasters of the Hispanic Monarchy (16th-17th centuries)

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Habsburgs governed an intercontinental empire extending from the Philippines to Peru; therefore, the dynasty was in contact with heterogeneous societies, with some antithetical traditions, religions and cultures. Furthermore, some territories of the Crown were regions where natural disasters occur with a certain frequency: the eruptions of Vesuvius and Etna, earthquakes in Latin America or floods in large cities such as Valencia and Seville founded along the course of a river. Although local governments often advocated interpretations related to the latest scientific debate to address the material damage caused by calamities, the Hispanic Monarchy defended an interpretative model of natural disaster, based on divine punishment. Struck by the consequences of a catastrophe, the subjects of the Habsburgs entrusted their hopes to the mediation of the saints, to appease the wrath of God. The researcher analyzes, not only the popular demonstrations that invoked the intervention of the saints in different regions of the Hispanic Monarchy after a natural disaster, but also the vary different testimonies of their work as intermediaries.



Valeria Enea (Università di Napoli Federico II - DisComPoSE)

“A che santo votarsi”. Cults and devotions in Palermo after the 1693 earthquake

In January 1693, after the disastrous earthquakes in Lima in 1687 and in Naples and Benevento in 1688, the Spanish monarchy of Charles II was severely tested by a new earthquake, this time in the territory of Sicily. The intensity of the event was such that it was felt all over the island, although the most significant damage was suffered at numerous locations on the east of the island. As usual, faced with an event difficult to explain for the societies of the ancient regime, alongside naturalistic interpretations, religious ones emerged in a more pervasive way. They focused on the vision of the natural event as a



manifestation of God's punishing force and on the recourse to the mediation of the saints to mitigate the effects of his anger.

The researcher investigated the cults and devotions promoted in the city of Palermo by the civil authorities (the viceroy and city senate), ecclesiastical (the archbishop) and religious orders (especially the Jesuits) in the aftermath of the disaster. The preservation of the capital of the Kingdom of Sicily from a catastrophe worse than that which had struck the Val di Noto, was an opportunity to strengthen local cults and introduce new heroic models through the establishment of new patronages. As was the case of Saint Rosalia - proclaimed patroness of Palermo on the occasion of the plague epidemic of 1624 - the cult of Saint Francis Borgia - whose miraculous power against earthquakes was already known in the territories of the Hispanic monarchy - spread in Sicily.

Thus, the event of 1693 offers the starting point for an investigation into the construction and re-functionalization of saintliness, and the highlighting of mechanisms, strategies and political, religious and cultural dynamics in the capital of the Kingdom of Sicily at the end of the seventeenth century.



14 Gennaio 2021 - h.15.00

**Forme e topoi
dell'azione eroica:
santi, popoli, istituzioni**

15 Gennaio 2021 - h.15.00

**Quando l'eroe fa notizia.
L'informazione sui
disastri naturali**

21 Gennaio 2021 - h.15.00

**Gesti e sguardi eroici.
Per un'iconografia
dell'azione miracolosa**

22 Gennaio 2021 - h.15.00

**"In atto d'implorare la
Divina Clemenza".
L'intervento dei santi
patroni contro la catastrofe**

**A cura di
Gennaro Schiano
Milena Viceconte**

Gli incontri si terranno in remoto
sulla piattaforma Google Meet.

Per il link scrivere a
infodiscompose@unina.it

Figure eroiche in tempi calamitosi

Santi e istituzioni nella rappresentazione dei disastri (secoli XVI-XVIII)



https://www.unina.it/-/24772397-figure-eroiche-in-tempi-calamitosi

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Figure eroiche in tempi calamitosi

Terremoti, inondazioni, uragani e incendi sono letti come eventi sociali, che forniscono un negativo fotografico rilevante sulla cultura e l'immaginario del periodo in cui si manifestano.

Il 14, 15, 21 e 22 gennaio 2021 sono in programma quattro giornate di studio organizzate dal gruppo DisComPoSE, con

l'obiettivo di riflettere intorno a l'attualità delle catastrofi naturali che ha stimolato, riflessione tra studiosi di discipline diverse, generando un dibattito sui connotati culturali e sociali dei disastri.

Nella prima età moderna le calamità naturali avvenute nei territori della monarchia spagnola determinano la pubblicazione di testi compositi – trattati, relazioni, avvisi, cronache e poesie – che circolarono nei periodi immediatamente successivi all'evento dentro e fuori i confini dell'impero. **Questi testi, pur se eterogenei, contribuirono alla creazione e diffusione di topoi ricorrenti, stili e retoriche comuni. A differenza di altre notizie sulle gesta di condottieri in battaglia, sulle sontuose entrate in città di principi e governatori, sulle nascite e le morti mitizzate dei re, la narrazione dei disastri sembra mancare di attori protagonisti, rimpiazzati dalla furia antropomorfa degli elementi naturali.** Eppure, talvolta nel racconto sul disastro naturale, dalla massa indistinta del popolo e dei suoi drammatici aneddoti, emergono singolari figure che entrano in azione stravolgendo lo stato d'emergenza: da un lato i santi, dall'altro le istituzioni locali. I primi sono invocati a mediare con i cieli e a placare l'ira divina con eventi miracolosi; le seconde sono chiamate a gestire la tragedia con aiuti e misure straordinarie.

Le giornate di studio hanno **l'obiettivo di riflettere su questi eroi dell'emergenza e sulle diverse questioni interpretative sottese alla memoria delle loro gesta:** dalle strutture retoriche comuni a cui fanno ricorso i diversi generi editoriali che ne danno notizia, alla relazione di questi con gli stili dell'epica e della poesia coeva, dalle rappresentazioni figurative dell'azione epica al loro riuso e adattamento in altri contesti di crisi, dal conflitto tra narrazioni contraddittorie alle ragioni politiche di questo conflitto, dalla caratteristica immagine delle processioni all'intersezione tra competenze e poteri di differenti istituzioni che si manifestano durante tali eventi.

<http://discompose.unina.it/it/14-22-gennaio-2020-figure-eroiche-in-tempi-calamitosi/>

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