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# The “heaviest rains that man had ever seen or heard of.” interpreting a weather event in late medieval Portugal

## **Abstract**

The royal chronicler Fernão Lopes (d.c.1459) describes a weather event on 24 October 1384 in which the future King João I of Portugal (1385–1433) failed to attack a strategic castle because of a tremendous storm that caused the army to lose its way in the dark and rendered the roads and river crossings impassable. The city of Lisbon flooded and there was considerable damage to buildings. The description of the storm and its aftermath is by far the longest description of weather for medieval Portugal. The aim here is to set this storm within the context of the late medieval crisis, placing it alongside the warfare, plague, papal schism, siege and hunger also described by Lopes, and exploring it in relation to research on late medieval climate change. Lopes’s chronicles are major sources for crisis in medieval Portugal, but this storm has not previously been considered in this context.

## **Keywords**

Fernão Lopes; chronicles; Portugal; King João I; medieval climate change; medieval weather; storms and floods in the Middle Ages.

## **Introduction**

The Portuguese royal chronicler Fernão Lopes (d.c.1459) wrote an extensive narrative during the 1430s–1440s describing the reign of King João I of Portugal (1385–1433). The account of the reign was divided into two lengthy parts and ended incomplete in c.1412. Towards the end of the first part, in chapter 164, set immediately after the raising of the Castilian siege of Lisbon in 1384 – a period of intense crisis characterised by plague and famine – Lopes describes a singular weather event. João (not yet officially king of Portugal) headed out from Lisbon on the evening of 24 October 1384, with most of his forces on foot as few horses had survived the siege. The goal was to

acquire the strategic castle of Sintra, “five leagues” or around twenty miles away, but the attempt failed because of a tremendous storm that caused the army to lose its way in the dark and rendered the roads and river crossings impassable. The city of Lisbon flooded and there was considerable damage to several key locations, including the Dominican priory. Lopes claims that “those were the heaviest rains that men had ever seen or heard of.”<sup>1</sup>

The description of the storm and the chaos that ensued in this chapter is by far and away the longest description of weather across all of Lopes’ chronicles. It is not uncommon for Lopes to relate the weather to divine will. For example, we are told that in April 1385 God miraculously sent winds to the rescue of two English vessels trying to get past a Castilian fleet and into harbour at Lisbon.<sup>2</sup> Yet, although he frequently refers to the beliefs of others regarding omens, Lopes usually denies that natural phenomena or accidental events have any providential meaning. Nor does he discuss well-established practices of astronomical meteorology and weather interpretation at royal courts.<sup>3</sup> Lopes does refer to storms elsewhere as having an effect on military outcomes, but they usually get no more than a sentence: as when a storm and fog went against Portuguese forces in

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<sup>1</sup> Lopes, *Crónica de Dom João I: Primeira Parte*, 317–19 [hereafter CJ1]. See appendix for the English translation of this chapter, which comes from the complete translation of Lopes’s chronicles edited by Teresa Amado, Amélia Hutchinson and Philip Krummrich, forthcoming from Tamesis/Boydell in 2023. See the project website: <https://fernaolopes.fcsh.unl.pt/> (accessed 9 November 2022). I have been involved in this project as a translator since 2009 and would like to thank the whole team for their help and support. All data underlying the findings are available as part of the article and no additional source data are required.

<sup>2</sup> Lopes, *Crónica de D. João I: Segunda Parte*, 12–13 [hereafter CJ2].

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence-Mathers, *Medieval Meteorology*, chapters 7–8; Carvalho, “*Vir sapiens dominabitur astris.*”

summer 1384.<sup>4</sup> Here in chapter 164, however, the storm takes up nearly four pages in the translation, an amount of detail that compares well with chapters 148–50 on hunger and disease during the siege of Lisbon. Unlike in these previous chapters, and in many military campaigns thereafter, Lopes's hero, João, did not win the day. The city of Lisbon, the personified heroine of this section of the chronicle, also endured further torments.

This study explores the extent to which this storm could be considered part of the late medieval crisis, usually said to have been triggered by war, plague, papal schism, hunger and climate change during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Although it is fully acknowledged by modern scholars that there was a political crisis in late-fourteenth Portugal, and the relationship between this crisis and the Portuguese military expansion into North Africa from 1415 has often been debated, the role of plague is seen as less significant and climate change is rarely mentioned.<sup>5</sup> Lopes's chronicles are major sources for this crisis, but the storm in question has hardly been studied in any context; indeed Lopes's approach to the natural environment has generally been neglected.<sup>6</sup> The first section of this study will outline medieval approaches to weather and climate; the second section will analyse the storm in its historical and narrative context; and the final section will argue that understanding the crisis of Lopes's storm necessitates understanding its didactic and structural function within his text.

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<sup>4</sup> CJI, 273. The longest other description of a storm (half a page) is in Lopes, *Crónica de D. Fernando*, 128 [hereafter CF].

<sup>5</sup> Marques, *Portugal na crise dos séculos XIV e XV*; Moreno, "La crisis del siglo XIV en Portugal;" Duarte, "'Tomar o pão dos coitados';" Ferreira, "Recrutar, produzir, abastecer;" Rodrigues, "Black Death;" Silva, "A Peste Negra em Portugal."

<sup>6</sup> The storm is not mentioned in the main study of the weather in medieval Portugal: Tavares, "Os sinais dos tempo." There is much more interest in the weather in Castilian chronicles, probably because of the major focus of Isabel Val Valdivieso in this area: Val Valdivieso, "The Problem of Precipitation in Castile;" Hidalgo, *Uso e Influencia del Agua*.

## Approaches to the weather in medieval studies

In 2010 two very different kinds of scholars published papers in which nature or the weather respectively were presented as protagonists in the lives of medieval human beings. In one paper, the economic historian Bruce Campbell argued for “the importance of natural agencies as shapers of demographic and economic development.”<sup>7</sup> He included volcanic eruptions, disease, rain and drought amongst these agencies. In a second paper, the literary scholar Albrecht Classen described how bad weather could have consequences for the characters of medieval literature. In particular “cataclysmic thunderstorms and wild torrents dramatically alter the course of the protagonists and force them to reconsider their own position in life.”<sup>8</sup> The difficulty other scholars have is how to bring together these very different approaches, especially as they use fundamentally different sources and techniques of analysis, and often very different lenses; one a macro, global, scientific, *longue durée* approach, and the other a micro, individual, close textual reading approach that can nevertheless have multiple receptions and transmissions. In the *Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, chronicles and literature, such as the romances analysed by Classen, are described as belonging to the “archives of societies,” to be distinguished from scientific techniques referred to by Campbell like ice core analysis and dendrochronology, which are part of the “archives of nature.”<sup>9</sup> Literary texts are rarely discussed in climate studies, unlike chronicles, but the literariness of chronicles is rarely acknowledged in these kinds of studies.<sup>10</sup> Although both types of “archive” could be used as proxies for climate change – that is indirect evidence from a period in which direct measurement could not take place – in practice, medieval narratives are very selectively used for such investigations.

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<sup>7</sup> Campbell, “Nature as Historical Protagonist,” 283.

<sup>8</sup> Classen, “Consequences of Bad Weather,” 19.

<sup>9</sup> Brönniman, Pfister and White, “Archives of Nature.”

<sup>10</sup> Camenisch, “Potential;” Trexler and Johns-Putra, “Climate Change.”

In an influential book on climate change, novelist Amitav Ghosh focused on the absence of climate change in modern literature. The huge scale of change does not lend itself well to storytelling on an individual level; nature and landscape are pushed to the background. Ghosh also argues that a modern focus on narratives of prosperity, growth and success contrasts with ancient narratives, which were filled with non-human agencies (he cites Indian epic, Homer's *Iliad*, the Bible) and showed much more awareness of the precariousness of human existence. Here he mentions Norse, Sanskrit and Quranic imagery and points out how texts like *Arabian Nights* or Boccaccio's *Decameron* "proceed by leaping blithely from one exceptional event to another".<sup>11</sup> It is possible to fit Lopes's chronicles into this idea of a pre-modern narrative context in which the weather plays a key role, and a king could be defeated by a storm. As Ellen Arnold has also pointed out "medieval cultures ... were tuned to the coming apocalypse in a way that we, in a world that is conditioned to expect improvement, advancement and growth, are not. Medieval people never anticipated bounty, only dearth."<sup>12</sup> Both Ghosh and Arnold suggest that the subjectivity of narrative writing needs to be historicised effectively and also embraced as a route towards understanding the impact of climate change on individuals and their communities. If we can recognize nature as a "protagonist" with its own "agency," as Campbell suggested, perhaps without really thinking about what these words mean, we need to accept that medieval people understood this agency in their way, not ours. We need to take both God and nature seriously as protagonists in medieval literature, and consider how weather events shaped action, provided structure, and developed character along the lines that Classen and other literary experts argue was the case.<sup>13</sup> If we historicise narrative subjectivity better, it could be an effective way of showing how humans carry out "crisis

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<sup>11</sup> Ghosh, *Great Derangement*, 16 (and all of part 1).

<sup>12</sup> Arnold, "Facing Floods."

<sup>13</sup> See also Classen, "Storms;" George, "Adversarial Relationships;" Reich, "Exciting Storms;" McCreesh, *Weather in the Icelandic Sagas*, chapters 8, 10–12.

interpretation” at different points in time, and in turn could help with understanding modern environmental crises.<sup>14</sup>

Medieval historian Trevor Dean critiques the way scientific studies of medieval climate change tended to remove subjectivity from research in order to establish objective proxy data. He provides instead a helpful list of five things to look out for in chronicle accounts of unusual natural events: ‘significance, scale of reaction, connectedness, prospection [what it portends for the future], and place in narrative structure.’<sup>15</sup> All of these things will help to structure the next section of this essay, although to this list will be added: audience – that is, to whom was the event significant? A description of a flood in Portugal might not mirror Italian chronicle descriptions, both because of climate differences across different regions, but also because of cultural differences. Lopes was writing from a Portuguese cultural perspective. He did not claim any personal memories of a storm that if it happened at all dated approximately to his very early childhood. The subjectivity at stake here is much broader and incorporates his own Portuguese courtly audience of the 1430s–40s, most of whom could not have remembered this storm either but for whom Lopes needed to (re)create its significance. We have to consider why Lopes described this storm for this particular audience at such length.

The aim in what follows is to explore Lopes’s “environmental imagination” along the lines proposed by Ellen Arnold for an earlier medieval writer.<sup>16</sup> What cannot be done here is any analysis of the “environmental drama” that might “actually” have taken place overnight on 24 October 1384 from the perspective of the “archives of nature” or other types of evidence: documentary or

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<sup>14</sup> Bauch and Schenk, “Teleconnections,” 15; van Bavel, *et al. Disasters and History*, 62 (and whole of chapter three); Schenk, “Learning from history.”

<sup>15</sup> Dean, “Natural Encounters,” 549. For Italy, see also Nanni, “Facing the Crisis;” Alfani, “Impact of Floods.”

<sup>16</sup> Arnold, “Rivers of Risk,” 121.



archaeological.<sup>17</sup> Even if the description of the flood damage in Lisbon reads as a highly plausible historical account, there simply are no sources to corroborate what Lopes tells us. This situation contrasts sharply with the detailed reconstructions of floods that have been done for northern China, northern Italy, Hungary, or the British Isles, all of which can draw on multiple sources to build a full picture of what happened.<sup>18</sup> The storm and flood described by Lopes is mentioned in the seventeenth-century chronicle of the Portuguese Dominican order in a manner that suggests that there were once other sources for the major damage to the São Domingos priory in Lisbon, but this seems to be the only other surviving account of the storm.<sup>19</sup> The combined effects of disorder caused by dynastic change in the late fourteenth-century; the re-editing of royal chancery records during the fifteenth century; and the earthquake that destroyed this same area of Lisbon, including most of the priory and its libraries, and many of the city's civic and ecclesiastical archives on 1 November 1755 means that there appears to be very little surviving material or documentary evidence for this weather event.<sup>20</sup> Most scientific and historical research on floods and climate in the Iberian Peninsula says little about Portugal, so it may be that no archaeologist has yet looked for

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<sup>17</sup> Zhang, *River* (which uses the concept of “drama” in the subtitle); Labbé, *Castastrophes naturelles*, 276–77, argues that medieval Europeans, unlike modern people, did not see disasters as a kind of theatrical drama.

<sup>18</sup> Zhang, *River*; Schenk, “...prima ci fu ...”; Kiss, *Floods*; Brown, “*Ventus vehemens*,” Galloway, “Storms.”

<sup>19</sup> Cácegas, *Primeira Parte da História de São Domingos*, 1: 368.

<sup>20</sup> Studies of Lisbon do not discuss this storm: for example, *A Nova Lisboa Medieval*; *Lisboa Medieval*; Martins, *Lisboa e a Guerra*. There are brief mentions without analysis in Passos, *Lisboa*, 81, 87, 92, 143.

signs of this storm.<sup>21</sup> The beginnings of the Little Ice Age in the late-fourteenth century may have created greater storminess in the Atlantic, generating conditions perhaps not seen in several lifetimes, but it is not clear whether this affected Portugal.<sup>22</sup> There have been several studies of Portuguese water systems, which exploit the limited ecclesiastical, civic and seigneurial archives as much as possible, but climate change and the weather are hardly ever mentioned in this research.<sup>23</sup> In 2013, Stéphane Boissellier described climate as the “poor relative” of medieval Portuguese environmental history, and Portuguese environmental history in general could still be described in 2016 as “emergent.”<sup>24</sup>

In what follows therefore, the focus will be on the role that the storm played in Fernão Lopes’s imagination, rather than on whether the storm took place. It is possible that repeated invasion, plague, and political neglect during the late-fourteenth century led to the deterioration of water and land management. Population losses for whatever reason could have led to reduced drainage, bridge repair and dredging work. If blockages in rural systems combined with a storm surge at the same time as overburdened mountain streams met city gutters perhaps neglected after a

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<sup>21</sup> Benito, Díez Herrero and Fernández de Villalta, “Magnitude and Frequency of Flooding;” Moreno et al., “Medieval Climate Anomaly in the Iberian Peninsula;” Corella et al., “1400-Years Flood Frequency Reconstruction for the Basque Country.”

<sup>22</sup> Brown, “*Ventus vehemens*,” 35, suggests that storms like that of 1362 could have been one in two hundred-year events. Climate change is seen as beneficial to the Portuguese economy in Rodrigues, “Black Death,” 56. Silva, “Peste Negra,” especially chapters 4, 10–11, argues that drought exacerbated the Portuguese fourteenth-century crisis.

<sup>23</sup> Farelo, “Recursos hídricos;” Veloso, “Água na cidade de Coimbra;” Trindade, “Água nas cidades portuguesas;” Gonçalves, “Sistemas de circulação de água;” Estrela, “Fontes e chafarizes;” Di Berardino, “Water and Sanitation Management.” For the River Tagus, which had to flood annually to maintain regional fertility, see Beirante, “O Tejo;” Pereira and Martinez, “Estuário do Tejo.”

<sup>24</sup> Boissellier, “Ambiente.” 33; Guimarães and Amorim, “História ambiental em Portugal,” 48.

summer siege, this might have caused flooding that was far from being solely a natural phenomenon.<sup>25</sup> Although Lopes is known for his interest in the *povo* or “common people” of Portugal, and gives them considerable agency in his narration of political events, he does not focus on the human impact of the flood at all, something that he shares with most medieval chroniclers.<sup>26</sup> In the absence of other sources, the description of damaged buildings should be read textually as a narrative indicator of severe impact, rather than as a clue to an unobtainable historical reality. Lopes *chooses* to place emphasis on other things: the flawed tactical decisions made by his “hero” João leading to the military fiasco of the night-time campaign. It is these things to which we must now turn if we hope to understand the exceptionality of the storm and flood and its role within Lopes’s environmental imagination.

### **The historical and narrative context of Lopes’s storm and flood**

The weather event discussed here was set in 1384 but written about in the 1430s in chapter 164 of the first part of the *Chronicle of King João I*. This section of the article will first of all contextualise this episode within the history of medieval Portugal, and secondly will set this particular chapter in its narrative context. It is important to note that these two contexts – the historical and the narrative – are closely inter-related as Lopes is the main source for the events of the late fourteenth-century, despite writing so much later. His narration of events has become history. Not all historians who use him scrutinize Lopes’s history as narrative; numerous scholars have studied his writings as literature, but not always with sufficient historical context.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> For the decline in maintenance of comparable regions in late medieval England, see Galloway, “Storms;” Rippon, “Adaptation.”

<sup>26</sup> Labbé, *Catastrophes*, especially chapters 5 and 6.

<sup>27</sup> For two historical approaches, compare Gomes, *D. Fernando*, and Coelho, *D. João I*. For pioneering studies of Lopes’s approach to writing history and its relationship to fiction, see Amado,

Lopes was the official royal chronicler and keeper of records for the Avis dynasty, which came to power in 1383–85. He therefore had access to documents and narrative sources that are now lost.<sup>28</sup> Part of Lopes’s task when he was commissioned to write chronicles by King Duarte (1433–38) in 1434 was to justify the rise to power of Duarte’s father João I, an illegitimate son of King Pedro (1357–67). As master of the military order of Avis, hence the title of the dynasty, João took advantage of the discord following the early death of his half-brother King Fernando in 1383. Lopes was always careful to call João “master” before he was proclaimed king, which happened in Coimbra in 1385 after victory against Castile at the Battle of Aljubarrota. Fernando had been succeeded by a young daughter, Beatriz, married already to King Juan I of Castile (1379–90). João acquired a following in Lisbon; assassinated Count João Fernandes Andeiro, the major supporter of Beatriz’s mother and regent Queen Leonor Teles; and defended the city of Lisbon during a four-month Castilian siege in summer 1384. This was the fourth time that Castile and Portugal had invaded each other since 1369, as outlined in Lopes’s earlier chronicle of King Fernando; a cycle of conflict that can be linked to an Iberian stage of the Hundred Years War between France and England.<sup>29</sup>

It should be noted that this was also an extended period of papal schism; after the disputed election of two popes in 1378, generally Portugal and England supported the claimant of Rome, whereas Castile and France supported that of Avignon. This ecclesiastical context helps to explain the heightened moral tension throughout the chronicles, and allowed Lopes to attribute Portugal’s political divisions to the coming of the Antichrist.<sup>30</sup> Lopes claims that the siege of Lisbon was lifted

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*Fernão Lopes*; Blackmore, “Fernão Lopes;” Marcos de Dios, “Fernão Lopes;” Sussekind, “Fernão Lopes.”

<sup>28</sup> Russell, “On the Sources of Fernão Lopes.”

<sup>29</sup> For more on these events and their contexts, see Monteiro, Martins and Faria, “Another 1415;” Sumption, *Divided Houses*; Baleiras, “Portugal, 1385?”

<sup>30</sup> CJI, 223.

because of a plague that spared the Portuguese but struck only at the Castilian enemy; famously he described how the Castilians were ushered away by an angel of death. This section of the chronicles is saturated with Old Testament imagery of hunger, war and death; the reference in chapter 164 that “new kinds of rain were born to destroy the world once more with a deadly flood” belongs also to this biblical imagery. After the siege, João and his right-hand man Nuno Álvares Pereira (d. 1431), later Constable of Portugal, had to capture numerous towns and castles like Sintra that held for Queen Beatriz and Castile, often with Castilian governors. On 14 August 1385 João defeated Castile at the battle of Aljubarrota and eventually secured his throne, although campaigning and diplomatic exchanges continued into the fifteenth century, all exhaustively described in the second volume of Lopes’s chronicle of João. It is a mystery why Lopes ended his account of this reign abruptly in c.1412, twenty-six years before the king’s death. Lopes was substituted as royal chronicler in 1449 and replaced in his position as keeper of the records in 1454 on the grounds of old age and frailty, but he may also have been on the losing side of another dynastic conflict between 1438 and 1449. This conflict intriguingly also involved a child heir, a queen regent, and ended with a major battle (Alfarrobeira, 1449). It has also been suggested that Lopes disapproved of Portugal’s invasion of North Africa in 1415; an endeavour that eventually cost the life of Lopes’s son imprisoned after a disastrous campaign in Tangiers in 1437, so chose not to write about it. The extent to which this fifteenth-century political landscape forms the backdrop to Lopes’s narration of late fourteenth-century events has long been debated.<sup>31</sup>

If we turn now to the narrative context of this chapter in Lopes’s chronicle, it is useful to remind ourselves of Trevor Dean’s list of five things worth analysing in a chronicler’s account of the weather: “significance, scale of reaction, connectedness, prospection, and place in narrative structure.” To take the last of these first: chapter 164 follows the long central section of the

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<sup>31</sup> For all this section: Amado, *Fernão Lopes*, 51–58; Parkinson, “Fernão Lopes;” Maleval, *Fernão Lopes*, 21–34, 43–47; Saraiva, *Fernão Lopes*, 7–22; Monteiro, *Fernão Lopes*, 71–107, 117–23; Earle, “Narrative Structures;” Gomes, “Alfarrobeira.”

chronicle on the siege of Lisbon and its political aftermath (chapters 114–156), immediately preceded by chapters that reflect on the siege’s moral aftermath, and which in particular recognise the “martyrs” and “apostles” who fought for Lisbon (chapters 159–162). João is compared here to Christ, Lisbon is personified as his bride, and Nuno Álvares Pereira is St Peter. Together they preach the “Portuguese Gospel.”<sup>32</sup> In the much-studied chapter 163, it is stated that the seventh age of mankind began with João, following on from a series of biblical ages. Some modern scholars take this very seriously as a messianic justification for João’s rise to power.<sup>33</sup> Teresa Amado argued instead that Lopes was parodying certain kinds of prophetic writing and notes his comment that he wrote these passages “as if in jest.”<sup>34</sup> Few comment on the storm that follows in chapter 164, but is it equally meant to be a serious sign or a joke? From chapter 165, João starts a long series of more or less successful campaigns around Lisbon and beyond but his ability to take towns is not as good as that of Nuno Álvares Pereira who has already taken Portel using an “inside man,” resulting in some bawdy humour (chapters 157–158), and had generally been very successful militarily up to this point. Teresa Amado argues that João and Nuno Álvares are both heroes of this tale, but João is presented as rather an accidental hero compared to his constable, if not wholly inept.<sup>35</sup> The location of the two chapters on Nuno’s actions and their comedic content, makes one wonder whether they should be compared to João’s failed attempt to take Sintra in chapter 164, also by intrigue rather than battle (the aim was to persuade the inhabitants of the town to voluntarily handover the castle). The storm in chapter 164 is a strange point at which to locate the start of João’s “great military campaigns” since it was a setback that seemingly placed the Master in a bad light.

If we consider the other items on Dean’s checklist, at first sight there seems little to say about significance as Lopes does not spell out the storm’s political significance in ways that we

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<sup>32</sup> CJI, 308.

<sup>33</sup> Especially Ventura, *Messias de Lisboa*. See also Rebelo, *Concepção do poder*.

<sup>34</sup> CJI, 316; Amado, *Passado e o presente*, 99–110.

<sup>35</sup> Amado, *Fernão Lopes*, 59–66.

might immediately recognize. In terms of scale of reaction, the Portuguese blundering around in the dark are bewildered, but nobody is said to have been hurt and in the morning the episode seems to become one of Lopes's many humorous interludes: "it was amusing to hear each one telling of the things that had happened to them." Another comical detail may be the flooding of "tiny brooks, scarcely big enough to house a single frog." The damage to an important ecclesiastical library, the flooding of a city postern and a major church, and the rendering of strategic areas: the dockyard and the main city square, into lakes, seem less amusing. Lisbon was presumably made very vulnerable by this flood, which is compared to Noah's flood and described as "infernal," but there are no obvious political consequences. Had this been a Roman chronicle, much used as a model by fifteenth-century writers, the chaos caused by the weather would have been an opportunity for an enemy attack.<sup>36</sup> The Castilian fleet had not yet left the Tagus, so was Lopes playing with his audience's expectations of attack?<sup>37</sup> In terms of connectedness, the use of biblical imagery is certainly important in connecting this storm to the siege, as outlined in great detail in a sermon summarised in chapter 151 (which links events to the sieges of Samaria, Jerusalem and Betulia in the Old Testament). Via this imagery the storm is presented as divine in origin. It could simply be another of the "waves of such storms" already suffered by the city (fires, plague, hunger).<sup>38</sup> The

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<sup>36</sup> Östenberg, "Defeated by the Forest." Livy's (d.17 CE) history of Rome was particularly influential; Lopes cites Livy in the final chapters of CJ2. For an overview of classical works available in late medieval Portugal, see Silva, "Peste Negra," 103–118.

<sup>37</sup> According to CJI, 301, the fleet tried to leave on 21 October but was prevented from doing so because of the weather. It succeeded in leaving only on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> CJ1, 284.

flood may also serve as a reminder of the city's key sites, several of which have already played important roles in the chronicle (the Rossio and the priory especially).<sup>39</sup>

Lopes makes no attempt obviously to portend anything in this passage, which is in keeping with his approach elsewhere. For example, while preparing for the siege of Lisbon in 1384 (chapter 111), those on guard duty claimed to see a visionary procession and strange lights shining for an hour from the lances on the towers.<sup>40</sup> Lopes is always careful to establish these things as the talk of others rather than his own interpretation. An eclipse of the sun in summer 1384 is said only by astrologers to be an omen of great mortality in a royal house.<sup>41</sup> In the case of accidents and mishaps, it is often Nuno Álvares Pereira who casts scorn on them as omens.<sup>42</sup> However, Lopes could just as easily have not mentioned these things at all. Such incidents contribute to Lopes's providentialism, allowing him to build up a picture throughout the chronicle that João's eventual success was a divine miracle.<sup>43</sup> In chapter 164, it is not entirely clear whether it is the St Elmo's fire on the lances that causes João to turn back or whether he does so because "it did not please God to end the bad weather."

### **Interpreting the storm**

It could be possible simply to interpret this storm and flood from the perspective of biblical imagery and military misadventure; that is, it was nothing more than an unsuccessful stage in João's

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<sup>39</sup> For the idea that a flood enabled the delineation of geo-political space, see Valdaliso Casanova, "'Fasta'," 189, n. 6. The porch of the Dominican priory was a site for news and announcements throughout Lopes's chronicles.

<sup>40</sup> CJ1, 201.

<sup>41</sup> CJ1, 253.

<sup>42</sup> For example, CJ1, chapter 152, and CJ2, chapter 6.

<sup>43</sup> Amado, *Fernão Lopes*, 220–23; Zierer, "Forças diabólicas e cristãs."



campaign presented in a religious framework. However, this explanation does not quite seem to explain the tone of the chapter and its location in the text. In what follows it will be suggested that the key to the puzzle surely lies in the opening section to the chapter. Lopes explains why it had been important to identify all the people who supported João of Avis (a long list of names in chapter 161) and to describe their first campaign together, that is the thwarted attack on Sintra, which included “certain nobles and citizens from amongst those whom we have named.” Lopes explains that “there is nothing so certain nor that better instructs men regarding chivalric acts than to consider the works through which former people excelled or had some setback (*algum contrairo*), whereas if men ignore them they will be nearly blind as to how to act in the future.” The last section of this essay considers the didactic role of the storm and its target audience. It will be argued that there are three possible ways to interpret the storm: as a warning or critique aimed at the descendants of the people concerned; as a protagonist in chivalric romance with key narrative functions; and as a way of developing moral character and prudent kingship.

### *Storms as warnings*

As a warning, one interpretation of the storm is as an *exemplum* for what could happen if campaigning at the edge of winter with poorly-equipped forces, whose strength was so recently depleted by a harrowing siege. Elsewhere in the chronicles Lopes briefly describes the negative consequences of winter campaigns. For example, an expedition in the winter of 1385–6 led to men freezing to death.<sup>44</sup> The expedition to Sintra was equally ill-advised. The blundering around in the dark and the lack of achievement were all unnecessary. At a deeper level, the reference to being in the dark relates to being “nearly blind as to how to act in the future.” The blindness of the soldiers and leaders can be seen as metaphorical. A military leader needs clarity and foresight; neither of which João showed that night. Lopes’s message is that his readers should be able to learn from this

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<sup>44</sup> CJ2, chapter 65. For other examples, see also chapters 160–161 and 175 of the same chronicle.

set back and prepare better. In several ways, this chapter is a continuation of the biblical exempla outlined in the sermon in chapter 151, a list of siege stories that is launched by mention of the “great darkness” (*grandes trevas*) brought about by the sins of Portuguese fighting one another out of “corrupt intentions” until “so little of it [Portugal] remaining that it has seemed almost naked and abandoned.”<sup>45</sup> The storm is Lopes’s exemplum of bad planning that left João exposed and without his army (“naked and abandoned”).

The readers in question belonged to the royal court at which Lopes wrote. As he says in the first paragraph of chapter 164, the point of remembering the siege and all the campaigns is not remembrance of the dead, “but to provide an opportunity for those who hear this to follow the good and honourable deeds through which those of their lineage won great and noteworthy fame.” The most important lineage to consider here is that of João himself: his children and grandchildren for whom Lopes wrote and through whose intrigues and campaigns he lived. However, it is likely that every one of the more than a hundred names listed in chapter 161 as defenders of Lisbon would have resonated with Lopes’s readership. Prosopographical studies indicate that many of the names link in some way to nobles, royal and civic officials, and senior clerics active during the first half of the fifteenth century; that is during the time of writing.<sup>46</sup> Even if it is too speculative to suggest that Lopes’s approach to the 1360s–80s reflected the events of his own lifetime, we can at least accept that he explicitly here encouraged his readers to use hindsight as a tool for future benefit.

The main problem of interpretation, however, relates to modern scholars’ opinion of Lopes’s treatment of King João. Much of the first part of this chronicle presents a “king in the making” who

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<sup>45</sup> CJ1, 288. For the idea that descriptions of floods were *exempla*, see Valdaliso Casanova, “‘Fasta’,” 204, and for exemplum collections as sources for disasters, see Berlioz, *Catastrophes*. For analysis of the sermon in chapter 151, see Maleval, *Fernão Lopes*, 178–84; Amado, *Fernão Lopes*, 211–23.

<sup>46</sup> Moreno, *Batalha de Alfarrobeira*; Gomes, *Making of a Court Society*; Farelo, “Oligarquia camerária de Lisboa.”

is often shown as indecisive, weak even, especially compared to Nuno Álvares Pereira. Some scholars have seen the whole work as thoroughly critical of the reign from its start. It partly depends on interpretations of why the chronicle did not include the conquest of Ceuta in 1415. Was Lopes prevented from continuing for unknown political reasons? Was Ceuta the blunder that he might have wished the princes had learned to avoid, or was it what happened later in Tangiers? Certainly in the 1430s some circles at the royal court doubted the advantages of continuing to campaign against the Marinid rulers of Morocco.<sup>47</sup> Maybe the blunder that Lopes wished them vainly to avoid was further dynastic and civil conflict, writing as he did in the 1440s during the tense regency of Prince Pedro, Duke of Coimbra, which led eventually to the Battle of Alfarrobeira.<sup>48</sup> It may never be possible to pursue these lines of thought further, due to lack of evidence, but it is worth keeping them in mind as possible contextual reasons why learning from the past might have been considered a good idea for this particular courtly audience.

#### *Storms as chivalric protagonists*

Another way of explaining João's "setback" in this passage is to interpret it according to chivalric literary models. Lopes refers to "chivalric acts" in his opening section. Throughout the chronicles he refers to the deeds of the Knights of the Round Table, and he describes the influence of the story of Sir Galahad on Nuno Álvares Pereira. It is often implied that João represents King Arthur.<sup>49</sup> The "Matter of Britain," and especially "The Quest for the Grail", were very popular in Portugal

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<sup>47</sup> See for example, the letters preserved in a copy of King Duarte's commonplace book: *Livro dos Conselhos*, 43–49, 61–63, 72–73, 116–38, which show that there was a lack of consensus even within the royal family about campaigning in Morocco.

<sup>48</sup> The dates of the seven ages in chapter 163 suggest Lopes wrote that section in 1443, in the middle of Duke Pedro's regency. See Maleval, *Fernão Lopes*, 45–6.

<sup>49</sup> CJ1, 78.

throughout the late Middle Ages as attested by these chronicle references, evidence of royal reading, and personal names at all levels of society.<sup>50</sup> Jennifer Goodman argues that England and the Iberian Peninsula “developed a lively chivalric relationship” of which Lopes would have been acutely aware; three of the royal princes Lopes wrote for were knights of the English Order of the Garter; the queens of both Portugal and Castile were English in the early fifteenth century; and Lopes described Anglo-Portuguese diplomacy as part of the Hundred Years War.<sup>51</sup> Lopes has fun with the Arthurian theme at times, but he was also critical of the behaviour of English troops billeted in Lisbon in 1381, and disapproved of “knightly” self-interest. The concept that chivalry was an ideal mode of behaviour does, however, seem to have been taken very seriously by his courtly audience: the importance of the heraldic badges and mottoes on and around the royal tombs of these princes is very clear, including emblems of the Order of the Garter on those of Prince Pedro and Prince Henrique.<sup>52</sup> Rather than arguing that Lopes’s work was “the expression of an anti-chivalric mentality,” as literary historian António José Saraiva argued many years ago, we should broaden modern minds about what constituted chivalric literature.<sup>53</sup> We should recognize a close relationship between texts that claim to be history (Lopes spends a lot of time claiming this status for his writings) and those that were seen to be romance literature in this period.<sup>54</sup>

This point takes us back to the argument of Albrecht Classen and other literary scholars that the weather in medieval romances could “dramatically alter the course of the protagonists and force them to reconsider their own position in life.” Famous late medieval examples include the magical

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<sup>50</sup> Gutiérrez García, “Arthurian Literature in Portugal.” King Duarte had copies of the “Livro de Tristam,” “Livro de Galaaz,” and “Merlim” in his library: *Livro dos Conselhos*, 207.

<sup>51</sup> Goodman Wollock, “Medieval England and Iberia,” 11; Russell, *English Intervention*.

<sup>52</sup> Torras, “Brotherly Love and Filial Obedience,” 30–44.

<sup>53</sup> Saraiva, *Fernão Lopes*, 42. For the poor behaviour of the English, see CF, 465–67.

<sup>54</sup> Gutiérrez García, “Arthurian Literature in Portugal;” Aguiar, “Crónicas de Zurara;” Gomes, “Zurara and the Empire;” Hutchinson, “European Relations,” chapter 5.

storm in the story of Yvain, and the wintry journey undertaken in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.<sup>55</sup> In these narratives, the weather, and the natural world generally act as antagonists against which the heroes must battle. The location of such “battles” or times of crisis is sometimes in the forest or “wasteland;” occasionally on the seashore or at sea. Although there are few specifically Portuguese examples of this kind of literature, there are sufficient echoes to wonder whether an awareness of romance imagery of this kind might help to explain why Lopes presents the storm in chapter 164 as an attack on Lisbon (personified as a vulnerable woman throughout this section of the chronicle), as well as the emphasis on the mountainous route to Sintra.<sup>56</sup> Of course, Sintra is indeed “on a high craggy mountain,” but such topographical detail is unusual in Lopes. There is something otherworldly about this storm that goes beyond biblical motifs of flood and desolation. Like Yvain and Gawain, João has to venture out of the city (away from his beleaguered lady Lisbon) to battle with the elements in order to further his quest, and as sometimes happens in romances, the elements win, at least temporarily, and the heroine suffers further. It is possible to speculate that Lopes saw the storm as a kind of chivalric interlude that echoed the struggles of literary heroes. Albrecht Classen and Philip Reich argue that storms and sea journeys could act both as catalyst to future adventure – an essential rite of passage for the maturing hero – and as boundary events between stages of narrative and plot development.<sup>57</sup> Lopes had diverged from his main tale for a few chapters and needed to signpost where he was going next: the next stage of campaigning.

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<sup>55</sup> See Classen, “Consequences of Bad Weather,” 5, 13, for references, and Saunders, *Forest of Medieval Romance*, chapters 3 and 6.

<sup>56</sup> For Portuguese forest and seashore imagery, see the origin stories of the Haro and Marinho families as translated by Rita Costa Gomes in Constable, *Medieval Iberia*, 418–20, and also the wild weather and forested seashores in a romance of c.1400, which may reflect Anglo-Portuguese cultural contact: Anonymous, *Sir Torrent of Portingale*.

<sup>57</sup> Classen, “Storms;” Reich, “Exciting Storms.” See also Saunders, *Forest*, and Auerbach, *Mimesis*, chapter six.

Lopes's storm chapter could have been seen by his audience as a narrative marker of a new set of adventures.

### *Storms as moral lessons*

The storm in Lopes's text is presented as divine in origin rather than as magical, unlike in some romances, but Classen's idea that a storm could force the hero "to reconsider their own position in life" leads us also to a final method of interpreting this chapter: the moral lesson. It is necessary to return to the context of the passage and its positioning after the raising of the siege and the chapter on how the seventh age of mankind starts with João. After chapters of praise of the young leader's exploits defending the city from siege, the storm acts as a reminder that what God has granted to João and the people of Lisbon could be taken away in a night. The storm therefore is a lesson about avoiding vain glory – that is excessive pride in one's own achievements – and learning humility; a king who only heard his deeds praised could grow vain and disrespectful. He might even think himself to be invincible and able to attack a mountain stronghold with inadequate troops! There is also a suggestion in the chapter that setbacks are necessary to build moral character; indeed, this might help to explain the chronicler's inclusion of João's frequent errors of judgement and his gradual growth in maturity. Although both Amparo Maleval and Teresa Amado briefly discuss the storm as a rhetorical device that emphasised João's self-sacrifice and his emotional journey towards kingship, respectively, it is possible to deepen the analysis to see Lopes's chronicles in a more didactic light.<sup>58</sup> We could see these texts as a kind of instructional manual on how to be a better ruler: an unusual set of "Mirrors of Princes" that taught prudence by example.<sup>59</sup>

Lopes's approach is not dissimilar to how João's heir King Duarte discussed the sin of pride and its various forms (including *vã gloria*) in his book *The Loyal Counsellor*, composed in the 1430s.

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<sup>58</sup> Maleval, *Fernão Lopes*, 193–6; Amado, *Passado*, 115.

<sup>59</sup> For this idea, see Aguiar, "Crónicas;" Zierer, "Modelos educativos."

This text, which can be framed as a Mirror for Princes based on the Seven Sins, argued that all deeds must be done for God, not for one's own personal betterment, providing the chivalric examples of his own father João and his cousin King Henry V of England, who conducted campaigns (Ceuta and Agincourt, which both took place in 1415) of apparently great folly against all advice because they understood that their success would be due to God's grace.<sup>60</sup> Another of João's energetic children, Pedro, was also deeply influenced by moral literature. Pedro frequently advised Duarte on how to rule with honour, and commissioned his own Mirror of Princes, the *Livro da Vertuosa Benfeytoria* (roughly: The Book of Virtuous Service), based loosely on Seneca's *De Beneficiis* of c.59 CE.<sup>61</sup> Pedro also translated Cicero's *De Officiis* (On Duties), a study of honourable political behaviour written in 44 CE, which warns against flattery, and promotes modesty in all things.<sup>62</sup> We know that Lopes knew this book because he cited the famous adage from *On Duties* in the prologue to the first part of the Chronicle of King João I: "We are not born for ourselves, because part of us belongs to our homeland and another part belongs to our kin."<sup>63</sup> The idea that princes should be humble servants of their people pursuing the common good was popular amongst Lopes's princely patrons, but was also absorbed by the chronicler himself. Lopes tells us in this same prologue that his aim is to write about his subject

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<sup>60</sup> King Duarte, *Leal conselheiro*, 48–57.

<sup>61</sup> Pedro de Coimbra, *Livro da vertuosa benfeytoria*. Pedro's *Letter from Bruges* of 1426, in which he advised Duarte on a range of policies, survives in Duarte's *Livro dos Conselhos*, 27–39.

<sup>62</sup> Pedro de Coimbra, *Livro dos ofícios*.

<sup>63</sup> CJ1, 21. Lopes's translation differs slightly from Pedro's in *Livro dos Ofícios*, 18, which Amado, *Fernão Lopes*, 55–56, suggests might imply political estrangement between the two men, as there is evidence of previous exchanges of translations. However, Lopes may have deliberately chosen *parentes* (relatives/kin) rather than *amigos* to translate Cicero's *amici* (friends). This may be another hint towards the audience of his chronicles: the families of those who took part in the events. For a close analysis of this important prologue and Lopes' concept of the truth, see Blackmore, "Fernão Lopes."

“leaving out all feigned praise as regards the good events, and simply revealing to the people in plain terms whatsoever adverse occurrences there were and the way in which they came about.”<sup>64</sup> Whatever we might make of Lopes’s view of João’s later reign or those of his heirs, in chapter 164 at least, he wishes to deliver some plain advice via an adverse occurrence: for all his status a prince is no more powerful than a frog in a rivulet in contrast to the power of God and the forces of nature that He can unleash.

## Conclusion

Lucian Boia has suggested that it may be wrong-headed to emphasize a major divide between medieval and modern approaches to catastrophe. A religious framework for interpreting the weather is not unique to the Middle Ages, and making too sharp a contrast on these grounds can be unhelpful to analysis, raising problematic issues of periodization. Even if “God and the Devil seem to have dropped out of the meteorological business” – which might be the case in Europe but is not true globally – questions of morality, signs and portents, and examples of foolishness and self-sacrifice still affect modern disaster scenarios, both how they are reported in the media and how they are narrativized in modern fiction and film.<sup>65</sup> Boia also suggests that apocalyptic literature burgeons at times of intense social change, citing the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century as an example: “when the social atmosphere is under strain, nature always seems more restless than

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<sup>64</sup> CJ1, 22.

<sup>65</sup> Boia, *Weather in the Imagination*, 124; Davis, *Periodization and Sovereignty*. For examples of modern moralizing and imaginative writing, including by climate scientists, see Chakrabarty, *Climate of History*. For the role of religion and belief in modern disasters, see Bankoff, “In the Eye of the Storm.” Schipper, “Religion and Belief Systems,” argues strongly that it is a mistake to omit belief systems from analysis of modern hazard risk and resilience. What does not seem to be studied much today is how belief systems impact on the recording of disaster response and experience.



usual.”<sup>66</sup> It is worth considering whether Lopes’s storm was a marker of crisis in this respect: a sign of changing times, a new dynasty, a period of great political upheaval, a hope for a more ordered future.<sup>67</sup> Lopes looked back and retrospectively diagnosed a crisis or turning-point; perhaps drawing unconsciously on signs of new crisis in his own time period. The storm in this interpretation is an example of what Thomas Labbé identifies as “environmental reflexivity:” the ability to see the relationship between human and natural events, even if the causative principle of the weather was often human moral failure.<sup>68</sup> It is also possible to argue that this reflexivity could go both ways; Lopes saw political crisis in his written sources, so needed a weather event to enhance and explain it. He could draw on old documents in his archive, and no doubt on memories of other storms, but also could use the storm motifs of romance literature to help structure his narrative and signpost key messages about prudence, humility and the importance of hindsight. Lopes did not need the memory or record of a “real” storm to construct this chapter and make it convincing to his audience, although it is more likely he did base it on some kind of record or cultural memory. Although it is not possible to determine whether Lopes’s storm and flood took place using other types of evidence, we are like Lopes retrospectively diagnosing a period of “crisis”; it seems to us that the storm could have occurred and ought therefore to be connected to other aspects of the “fourteenth-century crisis”, including climate change.<sup>69</sup> Portugal does not fit into current medieval climate investigations that focus on the North Atlantic or the Mediterranean; it seems that much more research could be done to bring together scholars from different disciplines to work on this region.<sup>70</sup> To what extent was there a crisis in late medieval Portugal, and did it act as a catalyst to Atlantic

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<sup>66</sup> Boia, *Weather*, 146, and also much of chapters three to six.

<sup>67</sup> For the idea that descriptions of disasters could denote a hoped-for return to moral order and social concord, see Labbé, *Catastrophes*, 151–2.

<sup>68</sup> Labbé, “*Toute chose se desnature*,” Labbé, *Catastrophes*, 114–24.

<sup>69</sup> For the idea of retrospective diagnosis of crisis, see Hoffman, “Thoughts.”

<sup>70</sup> See Izdebski et al., “Realising Consilience,” for a useful model.

expansionism? Although this study cannot begin to address this question, it is necessary in the future to bring a much-needed environmental dimension to the debate about what happened in Portugal in the late Middle Ages and its impact on the rest of the world. Yet when undertaking this research, it will be important to interpret the “archives of society” on their own cultural terms. Medieval people were able to include weather events as protagonists in their narratives of personal and social crisis, but could also potentially, much as we can in modern film and literature, summon up an imagined storm to emphasise the extent of the crisis; we need to understand what this means for how we write the history of medieval climate change.

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## **Appendix: Fernão Lopes, First part of the *Chronicle of King João of Portugal*, chapter 164**

Insofar as we were able, in these more recent times, we have set down the names of a number of places that declared for Portugal and also those of certain people who helped in its defence, not

because of some spiritual benefit that might accrue to the dead from such remembrance, but to provide an opportunity for those who hear this to follow the good and honourable deeds through which those of their lineage won great and noteworthy fame. That is because there is nothing so certain nor that better instructs men regarding chivalric acts, than to consider the works through which former people excelled or had some set back, whereas if men ignore them they will be nearly blind as to how to act in the future. Therefore, without prolonging this explanation further, you should briefly know that, with certain nobles and citizens from amongst those whom we have named, plus another group of worthy people, the Master began his great military campaigns.

The first thing that he strove to do after the King of Castile raised the siege [of Lisbon] was to capture the places around the city that had declared for Castile. He held talks with a number of people from Sintra—where Count Enrique Manuel<sup>71</sup> was stationed as Lord of the Marches—some five leagues from Lisbon, asking them to give him the castle of that place, a great fortress on a high craggy mountain with a town at its foot without any circuit of walls to defend it. One Monday 24 October, which was the day arranged between them, a little later than the hour of Vespers, the Master ordered those few horsemen that he had and other armed men and foot soldiers to sally forth from the city to a square nearby that is called Santa Barbara, indicating that he wanted to muster the troops.

After they had all assembled, the Master took aside some nobles such as Count Gonçalo and Archbishop Lourenço,<sup>72</sup> and as many other troops whom it pleased him to take; the others returned to the city. The Master left this place with them, none knowing where they were going save those with whom he had spoken. The majority went on foot, owing to the lack of mounts, which was a result of the siege they had been placed under.

While they were on their way, not far from the city, light clouds surrounded by darkness formed in the sky, dampening the ground with a light drizzle. It grew heavier until the sky was so

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<sup>71</sup> See Olivera Serrano, “Conde D. Enrique Manuel (c.1343–1414).”

<sup>72</sup> For Lourenço Vicente, Archbishop of Braga (d.1397), and Gonçalo de Teles Meneses (d.1403), Count of Neiva, see Gomes, *Making of a Court Society*, 90, 158.

filled with a rainy blackness that the night showed its deepest gloom before its due time. Torrents of heavy rain began to pour down the mountains. Coursing down onto the roads, their speedy flow greatly impeded the troops who wished to keep to their route. In this way, the tiny brooks, scarcely big enough to house a single frog, turned into such great streams that they put fear in those wanting to cross them. Each moment the harshness of such an intractable winter worsened, as in the sky it seemed that new kinds of rain were born to destroy the world once more with a deadly flood. Thus, with the rivers exceeding their normal bounds and submerging the familiar bridges, the men barely mustered enough courage to attempt the frightening task of crossing them.

Despite this, the Master kept to his route step by step, for no other course was suitable for those who had come with him on foot. He hoped that soon the bad weather would cease, as it usually happens, and that he would finish what he had set out to do. At this point, the darkness having completely descended on everyone with an infernal obscurity, suddenly there burst forth the mighty roar of a great wind, mixed with fog and hail. The wind blew itself out, and the whole sky unleashed thunder and lightning beyond the bounds of normality, as if deliberately sent to obstruct the Master's journey.

Then the guide who was leading them lost all sense of the terrain, which he knew very well, and the troops began to lose touch with each another and did not know what to do; nor did they know where they were, being already some four leagues from the city, according to what the morning light later showed them. Some chanced to end up near some houses and got their owners to come out and show them the way they had to go; but none could say or show them anything that was any use to them. Some collided into others, unable to see the way or where they were, and came to a halt, shocked by such an extraordinary night.

What is the use of dwelling on this since it is not possible to describe it adequately in words? The blackness was of such density that not even a lightning flash allowed them a clear view that was of any help. Yet just as with sailors to whom in the final despair in the face of a great storm there appear coronas and luminescence on the bulwarks and rigging of the ship, which are called *Corpo Santo* [St Elmo's Fire], thus on this awful night there appeared three lights on the tips of the lances

of some who were near the Master. When he saw such a terrible occurrence, he spoke to whom he found near him and declared that, since it did not please God to end the bad weather—rather, it became worse with each moment—they should not continue forward, but each one should do his best to turn back if they knew how to locate the path or to go whither they were best able.

It is important for you to know that those were the heaviest rains that men had ever seen or heard of. They lasted until around dawn, waning little by little as they had begun. The volume of water was so great that it could not be contained in the town gutters, along which it was customarily dispersed when it rained, and it became dammed up against the wall in such a quantity, that, coming out of the gate of São Vicente, the water rose to half-way up the postern and destroyed the nearest houses. It brought down a wall around the priory of São Domingos and flooded inside reaching a height of nearly nine feet; it devastated the brothers' cells on the ground floor and a very noble library where it damaged many very fine books. The water flowed so violently through the church door that it brought down the wall of the porch from where the friars preached. The whole Rossio was a great sea, flooding many houses around it. The wine barrels floated in Rua das Esteiras and Rua Nova, a galley floated in the dockyard, whilst many other things happened that seem impossible to believe.

The Master arrived back the next day in the afternoon without the company that he had left with, and it was amusing to hear each one telling of the things that had happened to them.