

**“PARECÍA LIMA ERRANTE,
TERRESTRE ARMADA”:
EARTHQUAKES AND INSTABILITY IN
VICEREGAL LIMA (1687 AND 1746)¹**

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Lima, more than other capital city in South America, has been repeatedly battered by seismic events. The city sits upon the collisional boundary between the Nazca and South American tectonic plates and the contact between those two shifting plates regularly generates earth-moving force. Lima was almost completely destroyed by tremors twice during the viceregal period, in 1687 and 1746, but eighteenth-century Peruvian historian José Eusebio de Llano y Zapata counted fifteen notable earthquakes in the two centuries after Lima’s founding (22).² Earthquakes affect our understanding of space in a fundamental way because they, literally, affect the foundation upon which we build. Pablo Pérez-Mallaína describes how these natural disasters shaped Lima physically, as well as socially: “Los terremotos quedaban clasificados en la memoria colectiva de los habitantes de Lima a través de un elemento inmaterial, pero que es claro signo del sentimiento de horror que produjeron” (57-58). Further evidence of this horror can be found in poetry written about the devastating earthquakes of 1687 and 1746—these verses provide insight into Lima’s general condition and response to these catastrophes. My analysis focuses on what Henri Lefebvre calls “representations of space,” or the ways in which two authors in Lima attribute symbolic meaning to two literal spatial disruptions in eighteenth-century Lima. One author, Juan del Valle y Caviedes (1645-1698), wrote about the 1687 earthquake as a part of Earth’s natural function. The other, Francisco del Castillo (1716-1770), declared that the 1746 event was divinely-ordained punishment for Lima’s sin. These two poets’ distinct views about earthquakes speak to the crossroads at which Lima found itself in the later part of its colonial period, and how they

¹ This essay was awarded the 2019 IASECS Premio del Ensayo Pilar Sáenz.

² According to Llano y Zapata, writing in 1748, Lima had experienced notable tremors in the following years: 1582, 1586, 1609, 1630, 1655, 1678, 1687, 1690, 1699, 1716, 1725, 1732, 1734, 1743, and 1746.

represent Lima helps us understand what they valued in *limeño* space, as well as how they viewed the world.

The earthquakes that wracked Lima in 1687 and 1746 stand out because they are estimated to have been the strongest seismic events that shook Lima during the viceregal period. Of the two, the 1746 quake is estimated to have registered slightly higher on the Richter scale, at 8.6, while the 1687 event is estimated to have reached 8.2 (Pérez-Mallaína 56). Both devastated Lima, and over time these seismic tragedies came to form part of viceregal Lima's identity. The Spanish chronicler Antonio de Ulloa briefly lived in the City of Kings and, when he begins his overview of Lima, the greatness of the capital goes hand in hand with its tragedy:

No es mi animo en este capitulo dar idea de lo que y es Lima pues el hacerlo, más que pintar grandezas, sería llenar esta historia de infaustas y lastimosas tragedias, representando en lamentables ruinas sus palacios y en desmoronados vestigios lo magestuoso de sus templos, sus corpulentas torres y todo aquello de que el arte hacía ostentacion, tanto en las obras y edificios grandes como en las medianas y pequeñas, cuyo conjunto componia el vasto cuerpo y armoniosa simetría de aquella ciudad, la qual es yá monumento de sí misma destruida á esfuerço de las concussions con que todo su suelo se estremeció el día 28 de octubre del año pasado de 1746." (2: 40)

The chronicler speaks reverently about Lima, but its tragedies have been awful enough that they must be mentioned in the same breath as its achievements. Ulloa speaks in very flattering terms about the city's buildings and praises its harmonious symmetry, but his assessment is a catalogue of sadness—the city's greatness has been reduced to "lamentables ruinas" and "desmoronados vestigios" by the earthquake of 1746. Lima's transformation from metropolis to ruins is the subject of poems by Juan del Valle y Caviedes and Francisco del Castillo.

Literary critics have tended to attribute secondary importance to the poems that Caviedes and Castillo wrote about earthquakes. Luis Xammar provides an important overview of the place that earthquakes have occupied in Peruvian literature, but his analysis does not extend much beyond summary and his catalog of authors does not include Castillo. Caviedes's poems about the 1687 earthquake have received similar comments from Giuseppe Bellini, Daniel Reedy and Francisco Villena—all three focus on the poet's refusal to regard earthquakes as a message of divine displeasure and place him in the philosophical camp of, in Villena's words, "la posición racionalista respecto a las creencias generalizadas." Eduardo Hopkins

Rodríguez, however, focuses on how both religious and scientific beliefs are present in Caviedes's writings about earthquakes.

Castillo's poetry has, in general, been overlooked by critics, and there is an unsurprising paucity of scholarly commentary on the *romance* he wrote about the 1746 temblor. Its existence is mentioned by Daniel Reedy, and Concepción Reverte Bernal says that this poem "proyecta la mentalidad de su autor" (368). Félix Vásquez dedicates several pages to it in his unpublished dissertation, saying, "Deja abundante información genuina sobre el momento en que se produjo el movimiento telúrico y el estado en que quedó la ciudad una vez que terminó éste" (177). This statement is accurate but, in general, Vásquez is more concerned with relating the material of Castillo's poem than analyzing it. Overall, there remains much to be said about the earthquake poems written by these two poets who were so well acquainted with Lima's seismic instability.

Both Caviedes and Castillo describe the ground-shaking events that devastated Lima during their respective lifetimes. These two men serve as poetic examples of two perspectives about natural disasters³ during the viceregal period. On one hand, Caviedes calls the 1687 quake a natural occurrence, a part of the processes that God has set in motion and independent of the behavior of Lima's residents. Earthquakes and suffering form part of Caviedes's poetic universe—in this way he echoes the Christian Stoicism of his poetic forebear, Francisco de Quevedo. Caviedes's writing emphasizes God as creator, but not as a vengeful force. According to Caviedes, God's created system produces events like earthquakes, and their appearance is independent of mankind's actions.⁴ On the other hand, Castillo declares that the 1746 event was a purposeful punishment from God for the city's licentious behavior and its citizens' refusal to live according to his commandments. The God of Castillo's poem focuses on mankind's disobedience, which incites tragedies like earthquakes. The dichotomy of material and spiritual causes was certainly not unique to viceregal Peru—when Caviedes and Castillo wrote, debates over what caused disasters already

³ I adhere to Jussi Hanska's definition of the term: "a calamitous event caused by nature, as opposed to those disasters caused by man" (11).

⁴ Hanska summarizes this early modern perspective on natural disasters: "Natural philosophers and other learned persons sought to give rational explanations to natural disasters. According to them such phenomena could be explained, at least partially, according to the laws of nature created by God in the beginning. Hence not all the disasters were the result of God's direct intervention" (105).

had a long history in Europe and its colonies.⁵ My analysis of these authors' earthquake poetry focuses on three aspects: portrayals of Lima's physical instability, the attributed causes of the catastrophe, and how the authors propose that *limeños* should respond to the tragedy. These texts shed light on how Lima understood catastrophe and its attendant results and causes during the long eighteenth century.

Juan del Valle y Caviedes and the Earthquake of 1687

Caviedes penned a number of poems about the 1687 earthquake. Here I focus here on two of them, "Al terremoto de Lima el día 20 de octubre de 1687" and "Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad," which are accounts of the disaster. In these two poems, Caviedes consistently maintains that these quakes are not a response to people's sin. He does, however, recognize their potential for evangelism: tragic earthquakes may turn people to God. These earthquake poems incorporate images of disaster, scientific explanations, and descriptions of social fallout, and provide insight into how *limeños* attempted to comprehend the tragedy that had befallen their city.

Shifting ground—literally, of course, as well as figuratively—is the focus of "Al terremoto de Lima el día 20," a *romance* of 168 lines. The *romance*'s loose rhythmic requirements and absence of thematic limitations permit the poet speaker to walk readers through different aspects of the disaster. The poetic speaker is an observer relating the action of the poem after it has happened. He is mobile, passing through plazas and temples, and even assessing the port of Callao.⁶ The speaker's account is linear, and he notes the arrival of the second tremor: "Tres horas pasado había / cuando ¡oh infelice fortuna! / otro mayor terremoto" (vv. 41-43). Marking the passage of time communicates both the speaker's knowledge of the situation and how quickly the once-proud city has been humbled by the undulating earth. The majority of the poem catalogues the devastation wrought by the second wave, and this is where the speaker observes and comments on Lima's instability.

⁵ Perhaps the most famous example from the Spanish colonies is the polemic in New Spain about the nature of comets. In 1681, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora published *Libra astronómica y filosófica*, in which he asserted that comets were benign events, rather than omens heralding impending disaster.

⁶ All quotes come from Daniel Reedy's 1984 edition of Caviedes's poetry.

Lima's Instability in 1687

The poetic speaker in "Al terremoto de Lima" emphasizes how powerful these tremors are by combining seemingly antithetical elements. Before entering Lima, he mentions how mountains ringing the capital are demolished by the tremors: "los montes se descoyuntan, / abriendo bocas que horrendas / bramaban por espeluncas" (vv. 22-24). The verbs in these lines ("descoyuntarse," "abrir," and "bramar") emphasize the tremendous force being exerted upon the mountains, which changes them from peaks into their opposite, caves. A few stanzas later, the speaker describes another unlikely transformation. He emphasizes Lima's spatial instability by noting that the city's firm ground has turned into water. The up and down movement of the tremor is so rapid that the speaker compares Lima's buildings to a navy:

Parecía Lima errante,
terrestre armada en quien sulcan,
si de los templos, las naves,
de las casas, las chalupas. (vv. 33-36)

The poetic speaker transforms solid ground into its elemental opposite, water, to convey how the natural order has been upset. Lima is now "errante" and the ground is so upset that its buildings shift positions like ships, "naves" and "chalupas." The naval metaphor is appropriate, considering Lima's proximity to the Pacific Ocean and the Spanish fleet protecting it. The earthquake has figuratively placed Lima's ships on land, making them an "errante terrestre armada."⁷ This speaks to a foundational instability that the narrator continues to emphasize.

In spite of their reputation for beauty,⁸ not even Lima's churches are spared during the earthquake. While the city shakes, the speaker tells us their fate:

⁷ In an interesting coincidence, this poem is ahead of its time in comparing earthquakes to waves. After the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, there was speculation about where the post-earthquake tsunami had originated in the Atlantic. Although John Mitchell wrote in 1760 that shifting subterranean rocks caused earthquakes, it was not until the twentieth century that geologists began to describe seismic activity as waves (Zeilinga and Sanders 3).

⁸ Ulloa and Juan say of Lima's churches, "Los *diamantes, perlas, y piedras preciosas* son totalmente comunes, y, disfrazado el *oro* en brillantes con pulidas invenciones engastados, desvanecen la vista sus reflexos en las varias *custodias y vasos sagrados* que tienen todas las iglesias" (2: 50).

No quedó templo que al suelo
 no bajase, ni escultura
 sagrada de quien no fuesen
 los techos violentas urnas. (vv. 57-60)

Normally, churches are safe places for the living—they provide physical and spiritual sanctuary from the outside world. The speaker alludes to Lima's affluence by mentioning the statues housed inside the city's churches. The earthquake, however, changes the churches' roles. Instead of housing prostrate worshippers, the buildings themselves throw themselves down in the face of the earthquake's power. Instead of holding coffins, these buildings transform into "violentas urnas" for the sculptures they house. Two lines later, the speaker shifts focus from Lima's churches in order to comment on how all of Lima's edifices crumble, apparently having suffered an unfortunate transformation: "cuya fuerte arquitectura / pasó de barro a ser bronce, / unos con otros se juntan" (vv. 62-64). Lima's collapsed buildings change from bronze to a mound of mud suitable only for covering the city's coffin churches. The theme of Lima's architecture is revisited later, when the poetic speaker catalogues what the tremors have knocked down.

Near the end of "Al terremoto de Lima," the poetic speaker addresses Lima directly. He enumerates many types of structures that have fallen and forces the city to reckon what it has lost:

¿Qué se hicieron, Lima ilustre,
 tan fuertes arquitecturas
 de templos, casas y torres,
 como la fama divulga?
 ¿Dónde están los artesones
 cincelados de molduras,
 portadas, bóvedas, arcos,
 pilastras, jaspes, columnas? (vv. 137-44)

In urban encomiums like *Grandeza mexicana*, the features of buildings are listed in order to emphasize the city's greatness. As Trinidad Barrera asserts, "El lugar que ocupan los edificios en el panegírico de ciudades es comparable al que ocupaban las fiestas y privilegios administrativos como la base en que reposaba el orgullo cívico" (188). The speaker in Caviedes's poem gives a lengthy catalog of architectural features from Lima's great buildings, but the extensive list only emphasizes the tragedy of their destruction. Throughout

this poem the speaker has used antithesis to illustrate Lima's instability, but the rhetorical question here highlights how Lima's greatness, which appeared to be firmly established, has disappeared.

The Natural Causes of Earthquakes: Seismology in Viceregal Lima

Early in "Al terremoto de Lima," when the poetic speaker is setting the stage for Lima's devastation, he describes the earthquake's cause using a naval metaphor:

El cable quebró del viento,
la tierra que en él fluctúa,
por los polos, donde aferra
la imaginaria coyunda. (vv. 29-32)

The speaker portrays the fluctuating dry land of Lima as a moored ship that has broken free of its lines. Metaphorically, the earthquake is a strong wind that rips the *limeño* boat from its anchor. As a consequence, land that previously seemed solid begins to shift and move. This metaphor remains firmly grounded in the physical—as opposed to the supernatural—world. Saying that the wind shakes Lima's seas not only is convenient for the nautical metaphor, but also demonstrates Caviedes's familiarity with seismological theory. When Caviedes lived, subterranean wind was widely believed to be the physical force behind seismic movements. This idea prevailed in the West for many centuries, due mostly to Aristotle.

The famous Greek philosopher proposed subterranean wind as the cause of earthquakes in *De Meteorologica*, saying, "The earth is essentially dry, but rain fills it with moisture. Then the sun and its own fire warm it and give rise to a quantity of wind both outside and inside it ... We must suppose the action of the wind in the earth to be analogous to the tremors and throbbings caused in us by the force of the wind contained in our bodies" (bk. 2 pt. 8). Erhard Oeser states in "Historical Earthquake Theories from Aristotle to Kant" that this theory became so widely accepted that Western seismology was essentially limited to Aristotelian commentary during early-modern period (17).⁹ The speculation about Earth's subterranean composition, and the correspondences Aristotle proposed between Earth and the human body, became the basis for the "organic" view of the planet that prevailed during

⁹ The *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History* explains how several secular alternatives to Aristotle were proposed throughout the Enlightenment, most notably the discovery that earthquakes are waves. The biggest steps toward modern seismology, however, were not taken until the nineteenth century.

Western early modernity.¹⁰ "Al terremoto de Lima" does not provide an in-depth explanation of the Aristotelian perspective, but the connection between wind and earthquakes is clearly articulated in another one of Caviedes's poems, "Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad."

This is another one of Caviedes's poems about the 1687 earthquake, a sonnet that details the event's geological causes. "Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad" has a very similar title to the *romance* "Al terremoto de Lima", but their distinct linguistic and thematic registers may be understood as indicators of generic stylistic differences. Caviedes is best known for his *romances*, the poetic form he favors in his anti-physician satires, but "Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad" is a fine demonstration of his familiarity with other forms and genres.

In "Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad," Caviedes respects the division of the sonnet into two quatrains and two tercets. The quatrains describe the dawn sky before the earthquake begins to devastate the city. In these lines Caviedes articulates an explanation for the earthquake:

Cuando el alba, que es prólogo del día,
el blandón de los orbes atizaba
en doradas cenizas, que alentaba
del fénix de la luz que renacía,
segoviana ostentaba argentería
la luna que de plata se llenaba,
a cuyo cetro el aire se alteraba,
que la tierra en cavernas suprimía. (vv. 1-8)

The numerous learned terms in these quatrains ("alba," "ostentar," "argentar," and "alterar") clearly echo Luis de Góngora.¹¹ They also propose a physical cause for the earthquake. According to the poetic speaker, the heat of the morning sun, "fénix de la luz que renacía," stirs up the air that is evaporating toward the moon. Eventually, the resulting clash between hot and cold stirs up the subterranean wind that causes the quake. Aristotle

¹⁰ Horacio Capel defines the organic view of the Earth in this way: "esa interpretación global de la estructura terrestre que parte de la analogía entre el hombre y el mundo concebido como un «organismo». El origen de esta analogía se encuentra en las relaciones de semejanza entre microcosmos y macrocosmos."

¹¹ The learned words from the poem's two quatrains were also used by the Spanish master of *culteranismo*, according to the list Dámaso Alonso compiled in *La lengua poética de Góngora*.

claimed that external winds, symptoms of trapped air that escaped from underground, were often at their calmest around midday and therefore noon was the most likely daytime hour for subterranean winds to burst forth as earthquakes (bk. 2 pt. 8). The 1687 temblor occurred around 11:30 in the morning on October 20, seeming to confirm this explanation. Just as his anti-physician poems demonstrate Caviedes's medical knowledge, these eight lines display the poet's familiarity with Aristotelian seismology. Caviedes's sonnet continues to develop this idea.

While the two quatrains of "Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad" allude to what has caused this catastrophe, the poem's second section details the temblor's disastrous effects. Although the two tercets do not name Lima explicitly, it is clear that these lines focus on the damage that the tremors cause to the area surrounding the capital:

Exhalación rompió con tal aliento
 los duros calabozos de los riscos,
 que a pesar de montañas y collados
 ligeras alas dio a la tierra el viento;
 pues volaron los montes y obeliscos,
 Ícaros a la mar precipitados. (vv. 9-14)

Seventeenth-century Lima sat in a valley encompassed by mountains and, as in Caviedes's *romance*, the sonnet's poetic speaker utilizes the mountains' shifting to demonstrate the instability of Lima's ground. The first tercet emphasizes the geography's immovable qualities—"duros calabozos," "riscos," "montañas," and "collados." The final three lines upend that apparent strength, as does the earthquake, by giving wings to these geological formations ("ligeras alas dio a la tierra el viento"). Subterranean winds lift up the earth and the mountains that once seemed immobile now fly through the air.

The comparison of moving mountaintops to Icarus's wings at the sonnet's close underscores how unusual this particular earthquake is. The son of Daedalus could fly because of his father's particular genius. Unfortunately, Icarus went too far beyond what was possible for humans, flew too high, and drowned because of it (Ovid bk. 8, vv. 182-234). Flying mountaintops also appear impossible, but they are given wings by the exceptional force of this earthquake. Because they defy nature, like Icarus, these suddenly mobile peaks are doomed to fall into the sea. "Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad" articulates how natural processes cause the 1687 earthquake. Human conduct is not mentioned at all—in Caviedes's worldview, only the expulsion of air from below the Earth's surface causes these tremors. Although Aristotle

popularized these theories, they evolved in the hands of his intellectual descendants, who discarded some aspects and emphasized others. The Greek philosopher's ideas about the causes of subterranean wind were tied to his proposals about what existed under the earth's surface, but one of his intellectual descendants made a lasting impact on early European seismology by separating subterranean wind from Aristotelian causes.

Several centuries after Aristotle, Seneca speculated on the causes of earthquakes in *Quaestiones Naturales*. The Roman Stoic considers various proposals about the causes of seismic movements before concluding that subterranean winds cause earthquakes.¹² By discarding the Aristotelian hypothesis about the causes of subterranean wind, and focusing solely on his idea that such wind was to blame for seismic movements, Seneca simultaneously affirmed both Aristotle and "those who think that earthquakes are indeed caused by air, and by no other cause, but for a different reason from Aristotle's theory" (2: 169). Seneca may be the source of earthquake knowledge in viceregal Lima. The Roman author's works were widely distributed in early modern Spain, and, consequently, in the Spanish colonies. Capel calls Seneca's Hispanic fame "casi una constante del pensamiento y del carácter nacional [de España]." In Seneca's wake, different ideas about what caused subterranean wind propagated and many were known to the educated in late viceregal Lima.

Another baroque *limeño* poet, Pedro de Peralta Barnuevo, also describes the 1687 earthquake using Aristotelian ideas in his *Lima fundada*: "Partos del gran vaivén son procedidos / Los que la Tierra exhalará mortales / Hábitos de sus senos sacudidos" (Canto 6, stanza 89, vv. 2-4). These lines explain that seismic movements are a product of the natural function of the Earth's "hábitos de sus senos sacudidos." In a footnote to this stanza, Peralta explains that these "exhalaciones" are ignited by celestial phenomena: "Abiertos los poros o conductos de la tierra al ímpetu del movimiento, debieron arrojar copioso número de exhalaciones, compuestas de las partículas nitrosas, sulfúreas y oleaginosas, de que se forman los meteoros ígneos de truenos, rayos y otros fuegos celestes" (317). This adheres to Aristotle's proposals,

¹² When he named air movement as the cause of earthquakes, Seneca explained, "Thus the great force of air cannot be checked, nor does any compact structure hold this wind. For it loosens any bond and carries every weight away with it and makes a space for itself, pouring through the smallest fissures. By the indomitable force of its nature air frees itself, and especially when agitated it asserts its rights for itself" (2: 179, 181).

and the explanation in *Lima fundada* is similar to what Antonio de Ulloa wrote regarding the 1746 temblor.

Seismology remained essentially unchanged between 1687 and 1746, so the explanation in *Vaje a la América meridional* does not differ much from what Peralta wrote in *Lima fundada*: “[el terremoto] proviene de el esfuerzo que causan los vientos con su mucha dilatacion, tanto en los contenidos en las materias sulfureas y otros minerales como los esparcidos en las porosidades de la misma tierra, cuando, comprimidos en ellas y no cabiendo yá en el reducido espacio de sus venas, procuran salir á mayor extension (2: 101). In short, echoing Peralta, the chroniclers assert that the interaction between subterranean materials leads to combustion and the expulsion of air.

The descriptions and explanations given by these authors to explain the causes of earthquakes reinforce the “organic” system of representing space that prevailed during their lives, in which the terrestrial body and the human body are affected by similar factors and react in similar ways. This is not an example of a Hispanic resistance to modern thinking, because Aristotelian ideas remained integral to Western seismology into the eighteenth century. It is possible, however, that these authors’ ideas about earthquake causes may have come from other classical sources, such as Seneca. Although mistaken, these men are descendants of the classical tradition that searched for what as Pérez-Mallaína defined as “una teoría puramente racional que era resultado de cuidadosas observaciones sobre la localización de los temblores” (412). The embodied language with which they describe the subterranean world (“venas,” “senos,” “hálito,” etc.) is similar to the way that they write about *limeño* society. Lima’s population also forms a body that contains its own “explosive” elements which threaten imperial stability.

Lima’s Response to Catastrophe: 1687

It must be pointed out that Caviedes was not a clergyman, but neither was he completely secular in their appraisal of the 1687 earthquake. Being a sonnet, “Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad” does not have the space to explore the social repercussions of this earthquake. Caviedes’s *romance*, however, does have the structural flexibility to detail how Lima’s world has been overturned. The poetic speaker of Caviedes’s “Al terremoto de Lima” anticipates that some of his readers may consider the earthquake to be an indication of divine displeasure:

Mas responderás que todo
lo han derribado las culpas,
que en temblores disfrazados
contra el hombre se conjuran. (vv. 145-48)

This idea will be examined more closely in relation to the 1746 temblor, but earthquakes have commonly been envisioned as divine punishment throughout history. Caviedes, however, tells us that this temblor is not in response to a particular sin—it is simply a fact of life. As Edurardo Hopkins Rodríguez observes, “Se puede apreciar en estas ideas los conceptos de una totalidad universal sistemática y del imperio de la ley natural, siempre bajo la presencia del espíritu divino como fundamento del sistema” (416). Instead of fire and brimstone, the poetic speaker is, like Quevedo, adopting a stance more in line with the Christian Stoic perspective. In *Los remedios de qualquier fortuna*, Quevedo states that one must simply face what challenges reveal themselves: “La vida es representación, Dios el Autor, á él toca dar largo ó corto el papel, y repartir los personajes de Rey, de vassallo, de pobre, ó rico: A mi solo me toca hazer bien el que me repartiere, lo que me durare” (134). God presides over Caviedes’s poetic universe, but he allows natural causes to play out so that mankind will recognize the fleeting nature of life on earth.

While Caviedes’s *romance* does not provide scientific details about the earthquake’s geological causes, the poem’s images of destruction emphasize the general lesson of life’s fragility. The shaking ground does not direct its force against a particular part of the population. Charles Walker’s comment on the 1746 earthquake is also pertinent to what happened in 1687: “the Spanish had laid out the city in such a way as to reinforce its order and hierarchy. Yet after the earthquake, not only had many elite and lower-class [people] shared the same fate, destruction, but distinguishing between the classes became difficult” (7). Caviedes’s *romance* emphasizes how every single resident is suffering: “El plebeyo, el pobre, el noble, / sin excepción de ninguna / persona, se atropellaban” (vv. 125-27). Every single person must remain aware of how quickly their life can end. The speaker details the devastation, and hopes it will inspire readers to live godly lives.

Caviedes’s earthquake *romance* encourages the audience to take a moral lesson from this catastrophe, asserting that tremors are not what *limeños* should really be afraid of:

Asústenos los pecados
no la tierra que fluctúa
en movimientos, si aquestos
de los pecados redundan.
Tanto como un edificio
ofende una calentura,
pues todo mata y no hay muerte
para conciencias seguras. (vv. 153-60)

Between “Al terremoto de Lima” and “Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad,” we can see how Caviedes’s worldview does not perceive a divide between religious and scientific belief.¹³ Numerous critics have made sweeping statements about Caviedes, such as when Villena asserts that Caviedes took “la posición racionalista respecto a las creencias generalizadas” (n.p.). It is clear, however, that Caviedes was also concerned with the world’s spiritual aspects. Hopkins Rodríguez has in fact equated this poem, with its closing moral lesson, to an *auto sacramental*. Hopkins Rodríguez recognizes the dual roles that this *romance* performs, saying that the mix of scientific and religious language “señala las motivaciones didácticas y edificantes del texto, al mismo tiempo que indica una forma particular de apreciar la realidad y de recomponerla partiendo de esquemas culturales consagrados” (79). In “Al terremoto que asoló esta ciudad,” Caviedes demonstrates his ability to articulate a scientific explanation for seismic movements but, in “Al terremoto de Lima,” he chooses to emphasize the spiritual significance of the earthquake.

The poetic speaker of the *romance* encourages readers to live well, so that they will never have reason to fear death no matter when, or how, it arrives. “No está en morir el fracaso,” he proclaims, “porque sólo en morir mal / están nuestras desventuras” (vv. 161, 163-64). This reinforces the Christian Stoic perspective, calling Christian salvation more valuable than life itself. As Quevedo says in *Los remedios de qualquier fortuna*, “No me alborota hazer lo que todos han hecho, y lo que todos harán. *Morirás*” (132). Both Quevedo and Caviedes write about a world whose space has been created by God but whose earthquakes occur independently of human morality. Overall, Caviedes seeks after the material causes of earthquakes while at the same time asserting that the world is governed by a superior power.

Francisco del Castillo and the Earthquake of 1746

Just as 2,000 years of secular explanations for seismic movements did not move beyond Aristotle, the most widely-held explanation for earthquakes was also ancient—that these events were evidence of God’s displeasure. This is the position that Francisco del Castillo Andraca y Tamayo, a member of the Mercedarian Order, takes when he writes about the 1746 quake. Pérez-Mallaína summarizes 1746 Lima’s intellectual climate in this way: “La capital

¹³ Hanska discusses how scientific and religious thinking often went hand-in-hand even during the European Middle Ages: “It was not impossible to believe that vapours breaking violently from underground caverns caused earthquakes, and still hold to the general opinion that God was controlling this process” (174).

virreinal permanecía anclada en la ideología religiosa tradicional ... puede afirmarse que la práctica totalidad de la población de la capital peruana consideró que la catástrofe de 1746 estuvo provocada por causas sobrenaturales y, más concretamente, que fue un castigo divino por sus pecados" (390). Castillo provides a counterpoint to Caviedes's view on seismic events in Lima. The earthquake of 1746 occurred in the middle of Castillo's life, but he appears to only have written one poem on the topic, a *romance* titled "Verdadera relación en que se refiere la historia del Temblor del año de 1746."¹⁴ The thematic and rhythmic liberties of the *romance* give Castillo's poetic speaker liberty to describe and comment on the event, emphasizing Lima's instability.

Images of Instability in Lima: 1746

Similar to Caviedes, the poetic speaker in Castillo's poem illustrates Lima's topographical instability by describing how building foundations suddenly shift: "los más fuertes edificios / temiendo mayor estragos / chocan por quedar rendidos" (vv. 118-20). The city's buildings fear and they willingly fall ("temiendo mayor estragos"). If the city's sturdiest structures are not secure, where can citizens hope to find safety? The next four lines in Castillo's poem describe how the people of Lima have come to doubt the literal foundations of their city:

Los [vecinos] que las vidas salvaban
de riesgo tan conocido,
aun ya en las seguridades
se imaginan precipicios. (vv. 121-24).

Lima has been so devastated that even safe zones appear to be on the edge of disaster. In *Viaje a la América meridional*, we read how Lima's ground remained unsettled after the strongest tremors had passed: "Terminóse el horroroso efecto de este primer temblor y dexó la tierra de moverse; pero su tranquilidad fue de tan corta duracion, que, repitiendose las concusiones con frecuencia, contaron sus moradores, segun avisos de una relacion particular, cerca de doscientas en las primeras 24 horas" (2: 98). These images of the blurred line between safety and danger inform us how space in Lima has been affected by the earthquake, after which even safe ground is suspect ("aun ya en las seguridades / se imaginan precipicos").

¹⁴ All quotations come from Rubén Vargas Ugarte's 1948 edition.

The buildings in Lima are personified in “Verdadera relación,” and their destruction illustrates how both metaphorical and concrete foundations have been disturbed by the earthquake. The poetic speaker attributes the sinful pride of Lima’s people to its buildings, and those structures are also humbled by the tremors:

No hay templo, torre ni casa
 en este vasto distrito
 que no confiese postrado
 todo su orgullo rendido. (vv. 193-96)

The humbled churches (“prostrado” and “rendido”) echo how these religious centers “lowered themselves to the ground” in Caviedes’s “Al terremoto de Lima.” The destruction of Lima’s churches, in spite of their famous beauty and ostentatious appearance, was a source of contention among the survivors. Walker describes how suspicions about Lima’s lack of true religious devotion dogged the city in the decades leading up to this catastrophe: “From the 1680s to the 1750s discussions about Lima’s sinful ways were intertwined with discussions of the city’s decline . . . They blamed the city’s social and political stagnation and feared the imminent destruction of its sinful ways” (24). As in the 1755 Lisbon earthquake, the destruction of these houses of worship seemed to some to indicate the sin that hid below their veneer of devotion.¹⁵ A notably small number of lines are dedicated to actually describing the effect of the tremors on the *limeño* landscape.

Cause of the 1746 Temblor: The Wrath of an Angry God

While the poetic speaker in “Verdadera relación” does give an account of Lima’s collapse, his discourse is not restricted to narrating the event. Castillo’s speaker also emphasizes the earthquake as a moral event: “yo cantaré de Justicia / la que en esta tierra hizo” (vv. 27-28).¹⁶ To the speaker, the earthquake is a justified event: justice must be served. God is gracious

¹⁵ Zeilinga de Boer and Sanders summarize how Lisbon’s clergy also considered the 1755 earthquake to be an indicator of the city’s sinfulness and prescribed penance such as spiritual retreats, prayer, and self-immolation (99).

¹⁶ The poetic speaker in “Verdadera relación” spends more than half the poem (124 lines) reflecting on Lima’s morality, whereas relatively little space is dedicated to describing the damage the city suffers (104 lines). Daniel Reedy points to Castillo’s tendency to moralize in “El Ciego de la Merced: A Blind Poet’s View of Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Lima” (43).

with his followers, but is not afraid to punish the disobedient. Castillo's poetic speaker sees a correlation between Lima's catastrophe and the behavior of its residents, a cause and effect situation that speaks to the city's guilt:

Era [Lima] pues, vuelvo a decir,
albergue de los delitos,
lo que aunque yo no dijera
confiesa ella en el castigo. (vv. 37-40)

To the speaker, the earthquake is a punishment ("castigo") whose occurrence is sufficient evidence of Lima's wrongdoing. This perspective on the disaster places responsibility for it on the people of Lima—God may have allowed the earthquake to happen, but only because the *limeños* ignored his previous warnings.

Castillo's speaker frequently personifies Lima as a figure who consolidates the citizens' problems and employs sensual metaphors to illustrate Lima's immorality. The city's life, prior to the earthquake, is described in terms of unconsciousness, a spiritual blindness that the speaker believes caused the tragedy, rather than with specific details. The speaker explains what this harmful behavior looks like in the poem's first lines:

Todo mortal que entregado
a los deleites y vicios,
vive sin ver que no vive
pues nadie en culpa está vivo.
De ese letargo en que duerme
que despierte solícito,
porque este recuerdo sea
del sueño total olvido. (vv. 1-8)

The poem opens by painting a picture of the archetypal sinner ("todo mortal"), who may appear to live—"entregado a los deleites y vicios"—but, according to Christian doctrine, is already dead because he chooses sin over salvation. The only plural nouns in these opening lines are "deleites" and "vicios," which serves to underscore the great quantities experienced by the paradigmatic sinner. This sinner is blind ("vive sin ver") to his state, not knowing that he has already died ("no vive"). The speaker says that this sinner has "gone to sleep," which echoes both the language of spiritual blindness we have seen elsewhere in the poem and the admonition of Ephesians 5:14: "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." The declared goal of the "Verdadera relación" is to bear witness to a catastrophe, but not to detail what occurred.

The speaker's aim in describing this disaster is to "awaken sleepers" in Lima from the behavior that caused the disaster. Unfortunately, the speaker says that Lima has "remained asleep," deaf to God's warnings: "en lamentos repetidos / de haber sido Lima sorda / á tantos del cielo gritos" (vv. 14-16). Later, the metaphor of blindness further conveys how fiercely the city pursued destructive behavior: "A no estar Lima tan ciega / pudiera haver conocido" (vv. 53-54). The metaphors of blindness and deafness are particularly notable because Castillo himself was effectively blind, and often in his poetry blindness is portrayed as a positive trait. In this case, however, when Lima does "come to its senses" the hour is too late to save itself: "vió Lima (caso inaudito,) / tan horrible un terremoto"; "No he de temblar, dice [Lima], cuando / enojado el cielo miro" (vv. 98-99, vv. 141-42).

It surprises Vásquez that Castillo would adopt this stance on earthquakes: "Un aspecto que llama la atención en una persona tan ilustrada como lo fue el Ciego, es que aun en el siglo XVIII siga manteniendo la creencia de que los terremotos eran producto de la ira de Dios en contra de los pecadores" (180). Reedy also wonders at Castillo's belief, especially in light of what Caviedes wrote about the 1687 temblor: "There is a marked contrast between the relatively unenlightened views of the Ciego and the ideas expressed by Caviedes more than a half century earlier" (52). This astonishment seems a bit naïve, considering that Castillo was a clergyman whose other writings reinforce the beliefs of the Spanish and religious establishments.¹⁷ Even many *limeños* who were not "of the cloth" understood the 1746 event to be a divine castigation, which Charles Walker describes: "the vast majority [of people in Lima] saw it as a sign of the wrath of God" (22). Just as we have seen both scientific and religious explanations in Caviedes's opinions about earthquakes at the end of the seventeenth century, Castillo lived in an eighteenth-century world where both the religious and scientific perspectives were also widespread.¹⁸ Castillo himself, however, strongly espouses the position that God has acted against Lima because of its sinful behavior.

¹⁷ Even though El Ciego lived at the dawn of the Enlightenment, he adhered to a conservative ideology, as Javier de Navascués asserts in "Palos de Ciego": la veta satírica de fray Francisco del Castillo": "Castillo no es un escritor de 'discursos alternativos', sino un firme convencido de la verdad de los discursos oficiales" (313).

¹⁸ Walker points out how these two outlooks coexisted when Castillo probably wrote this poem: "Although in the 1750s Immanuel Kant would ridicule those seeking divine explanations ... most mid-eighteenth century writers combined divine and natural explanations" (22-23).

The philosophical position of the poetic speaker in "Verdadera relación" places responsibility on the citizens of Lima. According to Castillo's poetic speaker, the *limeños* are responsible for their suffering, because they deliberately chose to ignore God:

Dios amoroso le embiaba
 los suficientes auxilios,
 mas por estar obstinada
 eficaces no los hizo.
 Que como el consentimiento
 lo dejó a su libre arbitrio,
 un yugo que es tan suave. (vv. 41-47)

In these lines the poetic speaker employs the language of the Old Testament, and highlights Lima's responsibility for ignoring God's commands. There were numerous warnings from a deity whose first inclination was to guide rather than punish ("Dios amoroso le embiaba / los suficientes auxilios"). Unfortunately, these messages were ignored by stubborn Lima ("mas por estar obstinada / eficaces no los hizo"). The speaker's explanation is similar to the prophet Amos's condemnation of Judah: "Thus says the Lord ... I will not revoke [Judah's] *punishment*, because they rejected the law of the Lord, and have not kept his statutes; their lies also have led them astray, those after which their fathers walked" (2:4-5). Both the *limeño* and biblical texts proclaim that God has tried to teach people how to live correctly, but they have ignored these overtures. According to the speaker in "Verdadera relación," the people of Lima exercised their free will and chose to live sinful lives.

Mankind's freedom to (not) choose salvation was particularly important in Counter-Reformation Catholicism after the Council of Trent (1549-1593), and so it is not surprising that a clergyman like Castillo would sustain Church doctrine in his poetry.¹⁹ As Vásquez says, "Por lo visto, el lego mercedario sigue fielmente la opinión que algunos miembros de la Iglesia expresaban sobre los movimientos telúricos" (180). In "Literatura y sociedad: Dos romances del siglo XVIII limeño, tradición y modernidad," Concepción

¹⁹ Paloma Fanconi summarizes why the question of free will was so important after the Council of Trent: "porque enfrentaba de un modo radical a católicos y protestantes: los católicos sostienen que Dios quiere que todos lo hombres se salven, y que a todos les da la gracia necesaria para conseguirlo, y lo conseguirán, con las buenas obras, usando correctamente la libertad que les ha sido dada. Lutero, sin embargo, sostenía que el hombre no puede hacer nada en orden a la salvación."

Reverte Bernal identifies how central the idea of free will is to Castillo's earthquake poem, as well as his play *Guerra es la vida del hombre*.²⁰ At the start of this *auto sacramental*, God proclaims to Man "que desde que te crié / libre arbitrio te dejé / para que obras por tí" (131). Later in this speech, God describes how man must choose a spiritual direction:

Y puesto que libre eres,
 en tu mano, hombre, te entrego,
 el agua, y también el fuego,
 elige lo que quisieres. (131)

These words closely follow Saint Augustine's fifth-century polemic "Grace and Free Will": "Now He has revealed through His Sacred Scriptures that there exists in man the free choice of the will ... First of all, the commandments of God themselves would be of no avail to man unless he had the free choice of the will whereby by fulfilling them he could attain the promised reward. For they were given so that man might have no excuse on the score of ignorance" (251). *Guerra es la vida del hombre* was written in 1749, and its human protagonist rejects worldly riches: "No puede darse a riquezas / el que a Dios desea darse" (193). He serves as a role model for Lima, and receives the gift of eternal life from God: "Ven pues, criatura electa / a donde dichosa goces / un reino" (196). Unfortunately, such a delightful future is not assured for Lima in "Verdadera relación." According to the poetic speaker, Lima's inhabitants must reap what their sin has sown. Their only hope is to change their behavior, which the speaker alludes to as the poem closes.

Moving Forward

In the aftermath of this earthquake, the poetic speaker finds a biblical precedent for what has happened to Lima: "Ya como a Jerusalén / triste y asolada miro / a Lima, llorando viuda" vv. 201-03). This echoes the Old Testament language describing Israel's tribulations after being unfaithful to God: "How lonely sits the city that was full of people! She has become like a widow who was once great among the nations!" (Lamentations 1:1). The inhabitants of both capital cities had the chance to receive God's favor but, having been unfaithful to God's commands, both have suffered. The appropriateness of the comparison upsets the speaker: "Ay dulce patria! qué es esto? / tú en semejante conflicto? / tú Lima tan relajada?" (vv. 221-23).

²⁰ Quotes from *Guerra es la vida del hombre* come from César A. Debarbieri's *Obra completa* edition of Castillo's writing.

Even with their knowledge of Israel's missteps in the Old Testament, Lima has followed in its footsteps. Although this paints an unpleasant picture of Lima, Hanska tells us why people were drawn to the idea that God had intervened with this punishment: "If God was the cause of disaster, there was some reason why it happened and therefore there were means to make sure it would not happen again. This explanation went down very well with the masses because it ... seemed to offer them a [chance] of doing something about it" (174). Lima has been given a chance to mend its ways, according to the poetic speaker, but their change is not by any means guaranteed.

The closing lines of this poem are open ended, just as Lima's future is unknown. The poetic speaker does not mention a specific action that Lima should take in order to improve its state:

Tú que del Esposo dabas
Rosas al Jardín divino
ves ya tus marchitas flores
que en azar se han convertido? (vv. 225-28)

Reverte Bernal interprets "Rosa" as a reference to Saint Rosa of Lima, the first saint canonized in the Spanish colonies, which means that Lima did once choose a godly direction ("dabas Rosas al Jardín divino") (369). Now, however, *limeños* have exercised their free will and chosen to ignore God—their spiritual offerings are barren ("marchitas flores"). The speaker does not fix Lima's future, and instead admonishes residents to reexamine themselves. Ending this poem with a question allows each reader to consider whether Lima has heeded this warning. Castillo did not write a companion poem expressing whether or not he felt Lima had sufficiently amended its ways, although members of Lima's clergy claimed to have had premonitions of additional punishment for the next decade.²¹

News about Lima's seismic travails spread across the Western world but, in general, Europe was not much moved until an earthquake devastated Lisbon in 1755. Pangloss, the optimistic teacher in Voltaire's *Candide*, famously mentions Lima after witnessing Lisbon's destruction, saying that "This earthquake is nothing novel ... the city of Lima, in South America, underwent much the same sort of tremor, last year; same causes, same effects; there is surely a vein of sulphur under the earth's surface reaching from Lima

²¹ Walker writes about the trial of the Franciscan priest Joaquín Parra, who, shortly after the tenth anniversary of the 1746 earthquake, proclaimed that Lima would be burned to the ground by heavenly fire. This, Walker says, was the culmination of ten years of disaster predictions from the clergy in Lima (23-24).

to Lisbon” (13). Although Pangloss is a parodic character, his casual treatment of Lima’s disaster rings true for how most Europeans viewed the 1746 event. Pérez-Mallaína summarizes Europe’s indifference to Lima, prior to 1755: “Los intelectuales europeos conocían perfectamente que, nueve años antes que Lisboa, Lima y El Callao habían sufrido un desastre de proporciones similares . . . sólo cuando la destrucción se produjo en su propio continente, la intelectualidad del Viejo Mundo decidió reflexionar sobre el asunto” (436). The Lisbon catastrophe inspired an abundance of study and speculation by Europe’s natural philosophers, with Mitchell notably hypothesizing in *Conjectures concerning the Cause, and Observations upon the Phaenomena of Earthquakes* that shifting subterranean rocks caused earthquakes. Charles James and Jan Kozak summarize the significance of Mitchell’s work: “Rev. Mitchell avoided the strictly theological and suggested that earthquakes are caused by shifting masses of rock miles below the surface. Clearly a new scientific rationality, a natural world of Newtonian movement and mechanics, and a geological view of time are given some impetus by European speculation about the great Lisbon earthquake” (28). We have seen how intellectuals—including Caviedes, Peralta, and Ulloa—had proposed material explanations for earthquakes for centuries, but Mitchell’s work, published less than 20 years after *Viaje a la América meridional*, marks a move beyond the Aristotelian model that had dominated seismology for centuries.

Conclusion

The literary treatment of Lima’s earthquakes gives us insight into the pervasiveness of topographical instability during the long eighteenth century. These responses to natural disasters also help us understand intellectual conditions in Lima, as well as the physical. Caviedes and Castillo’s writing about earthquakes are “representations of space” in Lima—by studying them we gain insight into the symbolic importance of these catastrophes, as well as the literal. Caviedes focuses on the material aspects of the event, the geological causes as well as the devastating effect it had on Lima and her residents. Castillo, however, takes a moralistic perspective: he identifies Lima’s immorality as its greatest issue, and so his *romance* explains why God was obligated to punish the city with the 1746 temblor. Less than 15 years after Lima’s destruction was interpreted through Aristotelian and religious lenses, speculation on the Lisbon earthquake moved seismology beyond the classical, “organic” model and toward modern seismology. By bringing together texts about earthquakes from across the long eighteenth century, we gain insight into the range of responses to the disasters that upset the

physical, and consequently social, foundations of one of the most important cities in the Spanish colonies.

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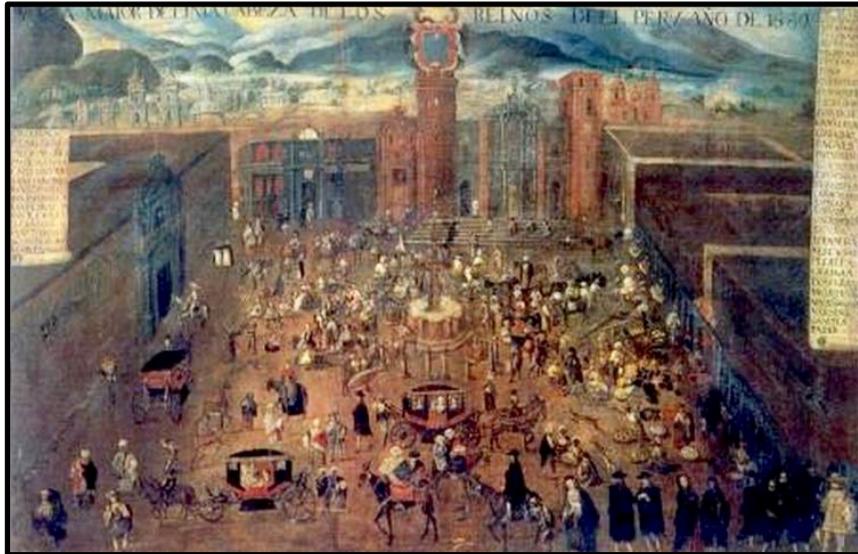
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Lima, 1687



Callao, 1746