

WATER IN THE *LLIBRE DE FORTUNA I PRUDÈNCIA* BY BERNAT METGE¹

El agua en el *Llibre de Fortuna i Prudència*, de Bernat Metge

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Abstract: In his *Llibre de Fortuna i Prudència* (end of 14th c.) Bernat Metge makes ample use of the water imagery. The main character departs from the port of Barcelona in a small boat and is lost at sea in the midst of a furious storm; he spends time in a remote island surrounded by dangerous waters and criss-crossed by rivers; and returns to the safe haven of the Barcelona waters.

Key Words: Bernat Metge. *Llibre de Fortuna i Prudència* (Book of Fortune and Prudence). Water. Isle of Fortune.

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Resumen: La obra de Bernat Metge *Llibre de Fortuna i Prudència* es un ejemplo del uso literario de diferentes imágenes sobre el agua a finales del siglo XIV. El personaje principal parte del puerto de Barcelona en un bote pequeño y se pierde en el mar en medio de una tormenta furiosa, pasa tiempo en una isla remota rodeada de aguas peligrosas y atravesada por ríos, y vuelve al refugio seguro de las aguas de Barcelona.

Palabras clave: Bernat Metge. *Llibre de Fortuna i Prudència*. Agua. Isla Fortuna.

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* INTRODUCTION

In his *Llibre de Fortuna i Prudència* (end of 14th c.) Bernat Metge makes ample use of the water imagery³. The main character departs from the port of Barcelona in a small boat and is lost at sea in the midst of a furious storm; he spends time in a remote island surrounded by dangerous waters and criss-crossed by rivers; and returns to the safe haven of the Barcelona waters. The water metaphor encapsulates a message full of biblical, ethical, and commercial resonance for an Aragonese audience who was at the end of the 14th century very much dependant on the ocean and the water for their livelihood and who identified with the metaphor at both a symbolic and practical level.

1. THE AUTHOR

Bernat Metge is one of the most intriguing figures in medieval Catalan letters. He was probably born before 1346. His father, Guillem Metge, was an *especier* (pharmacist) related to the royal Catalan household. His mother, Agnès, remarried one of Guillem's colleagues, Ferrer

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3 MIQUEL Y PLANAS, R., *Les obres d'en Bernat Metge: Lo Llibre de Mals Amonestaments; Lo Llibre de Fortuna e Prudencia; La Historia de Valter y Griselda; Lo Somni, hont se tracta de la immortalitat de l'ànima, de la sobtosa mort el Rey en Johan, de coses infernals y de costumes de homens y de fembres. Textes autèntichs, publicats en vista de tots els manuscrits coneguts per R. Miquel y Planas*, Barcelona: Nova Biblioteca Catalana, 1910.

Sayol (Saiol), who was a royal secretary working for Queen Eleonor (Elionor) de Prades and Peter IV of Aragon. Saiol was the Queen's protonotary (chief secretary) since 1365. Sayol was also a translator of *De re rustica* by Palladius and exerted a large influence on Metge's intellectual formation. Probably under his guidance, Metge began his public career in 1371 as registry assistant at the service of Eleanor (Elionor) of Sicily (1371-1375), third wife of Peter IV of Aragon (Peter the Ceremonious, 1319-1387). His position required a knowledge of Latin, Catalan and Aragonese, as well as basic preparation in Christian doctrine, liberal arts, and basic legal principles. His works also reflect a knowledge of Occitan, French, and Italian. Metge entered the royal household of Peter IV of Aragon and Catalonia and served as secretary-mentor for Prince John (the Infante, Duke of Girona and future King John I [Joan I]).

He was arrested for obscure reasons in 1381 and in that year he wrote his *Llibre de Fortuna e Prudència*, an attempt at explaining his tribulations as a divine test of his virtue, moral endurance, and innocence. He continued working for Prince John after the latter's ascension to the throne in 1387 and became secretary-procurator for John and his wife, the French Queen Violante (1390-1396). In 1388 he suffered imprisonment again and composed his *Història de Valter e Griselda* (the letter that opens this work includes his own declaration of innocence). Subsequently he became an administrator for King John I, and was in charge of the tithes that Pope Clement VII had granted this monarch for the pacification of Sardinia. In 1393 he was appointed procurator general of court affairs. Furthermore, in 1395 he was commissioned as ambassador to the papal court at Avignon where he became very familiar with the new literary humanistic *milieu*. Upon the King's death in 1396 he suffered persecution and imprisonment, and during this time he wrote *Medicina apropiada a tot mal* and particularly *Lo Somni* (between 1398-1399). After 1399, thanks in part to this latter work, the new King Martí I reinstated him to his previous positions and Metge worked again as royal secretary. In a document from 1405 he signs again as royal secretary, fading from the public view after the king's death in 1410. He died as a private citizen in Barcelona in 1413.

Bernat Metge is the author of seven works whose exact chronology is still being debated by scholars.

1-The oldest one is probably his *Sermó* (ca. 1381), an irreverent parody in verse of a religious sermon dealing with monetary and misogynistic topics.

2-He is also the author of a satirical poem entitled *Medecina apropiada a tot mal*.

3-The *Llibre de Fortuna e Prudencia* (1381) is Metge's second-most famous work. It has been termed «a fantasy in verse» and has been considered a philosophical treatise rather than a poetic work. It describes an imaginary journey that Bernat, the protagonist and narrator, undertook by boat from the port of Barcelona to an island where the goddess Fortune appears to him. The two characters engage in a dialogue in which Bernat blames the goddess for all his misfortunes. Prudence and her seven maidens (the seven liberal arts) counsel him to trust in the Divine Providence and renounce his material possessions. After being deemed «cured», the protagonist is sent back to the port of Barcelona. It has long been claimed that this work was composed by Metge while in prison as a consequence of his involvement in the unfortunate events surrounding the crash of the financial empire of the royal bankers Pere des Caus and Andreu d'Olivella in 1381.

4-*Història de Valter e Griselda* is a translation from Petrarch's Latin version of Boccaccio's famous story of Griselda. This work is dated ca. 1388.

5-Another work composed by Metge is *Ovidi enamorat*, a free translation of an anonymous Latin poem from the 13th century entitled *De vetula*.

6-Only the beginning of his *Apologia* (1395) has come down to us, probably because the work's topic was later reworked by Metge in *Lo Somni*. It consists of the intimate confession of a character drawing heavily on Petrarch's *Secretum*.

7-*Lo Somni (The Dream)* is a dream allegory divided into four chapters or *books*⁴. It was written ca. 1399 and is considered Bernat Metge's best work. It consists of a dialogue between Metge-the-character and several participants on the topics of the immortality of the soul, the essence of religion and the dignity and moral essence of the human being. Metge is capable of conjuring up the Classical and Christian worlds of letters to make them come to his literary and philosophical aid. Metge dialogues with Valerius Maximus as the two of them embark upon a praise of women; he engages in a reflective dialogue about men's moral fiber with Petrarch's *De remediis, Familiares, Seniles* and *Secretum*; he dreams of the immortality of the soul with Cicero, Casiodorus, Gregory, Augustine or Aquinas; he consoles himself with Boetius; he recites both the Old and New Testaments as he tries to find examples of righteous conduct; finally, he reflects with Lull about Muslim and Jewish conceptualizations of the rewards of Paradise and *de vita beata*. And above all, *Lo Somni* is a dream-allegory in which all these sources, literary and philosophical traditions, are put to good use while trying to determine men's moral essence in the midst of the author's grief and suffering. Prompted by a difficult vital situation, Metge rises in the face adversity and *stands on the shoulders of giants*.

2. THE *LLIBRE DE FORTUNA E PRUDÈNCIA*

The *Llibre de Fortuna e Prudència* is an allegorical narrative poem composed of 1294 verses written in octosyllabic rhyming couplets (*noves rimades*) (aabbcc). According to Miguel Marco, one of its most recent editors, «the *Book of Fortune and Prudence* together with the *Sermó* and *Medicina* are a trilogy of burlesque works that attempt to parody several types of texts typical from the Middle Ages: debates, sermons, and *electuaria*, respectively. Metge's *modus operandi* often involves a parody of a literary genre by imitating the structure characteristic of the text being parodied»⁵.

On May 1st, 1381, Bernat wakes up feeling unwell and decides to go for a walk by the waterfront of Barcelona where he sees an old man sitting naked. Bernat thinks that he is a beggar and offers him some money. The old man -whom some critics interpret as the old philosopher Diogenes the Cynic- refuses but asks Bernat-the-character to bring him a cape that he left on a boat. Bernat obliges but as soon as he boards the boat, «he -like the deceitful villain he was-pushed the boat off with only me on board. I had no sails nor oars nor rudder, nothing at all»⁶. After sailing through a dangerous storm, Bernat's boat arrives to a rocky island that he believes to be uninhabited at first.

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4 CORTIJO OCAÑA, A. and LAGRESSA E. (eds.), *Bernat METGE, Lo Somni / The Dream of Bernat Metge*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013.

5 METJE, B., *El llibre de Fortuna e Prudència*, Barcelona: Reial Academia de Bones Letres, 2010, p. 17 [Miquel Marco (ed.)].

6 METJE, B., *The Book of Fortune and Prudence*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2014, p. 57 [Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, A. and Vicent Martines (eds.)].

There follows a description of the strange fauna and flora of this place that draws heavily on Lille's *Anticlaudianus* and the *Romance de la Rose*⁷. The weather changed frequently destroying plants, flowers and fruits. The narrator is «struck that neither God nor nature were present there, because there was no order or balance, nor anything else governed by Reason»⁸. From a rocky promontory he is able to see a castle that is richly decorated and equally filthy in some parts:

Let it be then known that the sea surrounded the rock on all sides and that it rose up so high that you could reach the First Heaven with a dart. When the wind abated and the weather became pleasant, the sea calmed again and caused no disturbance or damage on the land, and all plants began to bloom. Leaves, flowers, and fruits could be seen all together as long as the mild weather lasted. But when it changed, all you could do was make your confession, for then you saw the waters mount up so high that they covered the rock and not much later the sea went down to the depths and rose up high again. And the waters uprooted all the plants, the flowers and the fruits -which looked as if they had been scorched by fire- and the leaves [v. 208] and everything that was beginning to sprout, so that not one of them remained. Shortly afterwards the bad weather abated and the good one returned⁹.

The narrator meets the owner of the castle, Fortune herself. After describing her terrifying ugliness, Metge draws on Settimello's *Elegy* to blame her for his travails. She responds that she has not taken away from him more than she has given him and introduces some parallels between the narrator's misfortunes and contemporary usurious banking practices.

Afterwards, he sees a beautiful lady, Prudence, accompanied by the Seven Liberal Arts. Prudence is modeled after Philosophy in Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae*, as well as after Prudence in *Anticlaudianus* and Phronesis in Settimello's *Elegy*. There follows a lengthy dialogue in which Prudence cures Metge of his opinions. Fortune is not to be blamed for his troubles as she does not have the power Metge claims. Prudence disserts on wealth vs. goodness, suffering and patience, divine judgment and human reason, as well as on the nature of good and evil. She concludes by using a syllogism: Evil is the absence of good; the absence of something is nothing; therefore man's evil or wrongdoing is necessarily nothing. This syllogism proves that Fortune is always good:

Therefore, consider it proven: God is the supreme judge and everything that is or will be done is subject to His will and is so well ordered that it lacks for nothing. [...] God -who is the supreme good- wanted to create the world and everything else He has formed to a good end. And if you want to reflect upon the definition of evil, you will realize that there was never evil in this world, only good. I will tell you the definition: evil is the absence of good. So there is no need to prove that the evil committed by man does not exist; [and] since the lack of something does not have real existence, it follows that man's evildoing does not exist either. Therefore I have clearly proven that Fortune is always good¹⁰.

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7 RAYNAUD DE LAGE, G., *Alain de Lille. Poète du XIIIe siècle*, Montreal-Paris: Publications de l'Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1951; BEDEL, Y., *Le Roman de la Rose au XIVe siècle. Étude de la réception de l'œuvre*, Genève: Droz, 1980; LORRIS, G., De MEUN, J. and LANGLOIS, E. (ed.), *Le Roman de la Rose*, Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1914-1921.

8 METJE, B., *The Book of Fortune and Prudence...*, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

10 METJE, B., *The Book of Fortune and Prudence...*, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

After declaring him cured, Prudence and her Seven Maidens return the main character, that is Metge, to his boat and he is brought back safely to Barcelona. As almost no real time has elapsed since he first set off on his trip, he hurries back to his house:

After a while, I arrived at the place where I had withdrawn when the ill-dressed villain betrayed and deceived me. Scarcely had I landed when the boat suddenly made such noise before my eyes that I thought it was totally destroyed. I turned around and could not see anything; I did not even know if I had had a good journey. But before daybreak, so as not to be criticized for having risen so early and gone for a walk all by myself (for whosoever does not put on airs is valued less than a snail), I hurried back home, in the city of Barcelona, where I was born and where I will die, as I believe¹¹.

3. LITERARY SOURCES

Metge draws from a large variety of sources in order to recreate the figures of the old deceitful poor villain, Fortune, Prudence and Nature, as well as the literary *topoi* of the journey to the Netherworld and the (foreboding) Island of Fortune¹².

Metge's literary sources for his *Book of Fortune and Prudence* include the following¹³: the *Faula* by Guillem de Torroella (ca. 1370)¹⁴, (a poem in *noves rimades* written in Catalan which narrates the journey through the ocean to the Netherworld undertaken under false premises by a

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11 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

12 TAYLOR, B., «Juan de Mena, la écfraſis y las dos Fortunas: Laberinto de Fortuna, 143-208», *Revista de Literatura Medieval*, 1994, n.º 6, pp. 171-181; MENDOZA NEGRILLO, J., *Fortuna y Providencia en la literatura castellana del siglo XV*, Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1973; GONZÁLEZ GARCÍA, J. M., *La diosa Fortuna: metamorfosis de una metáfora política*, Boadilla del Monte: A. Machado Libros, 2006.

13 BADIA, L., «Siats de natura d'anguila en quant farets: la literatura segons Bernat Metge», *El Crotalón. Anuario de Filología Española*, 1984, n.º 1, pp. 25-65; ID., «De La Faula al Tirant lo Blanc, passant, sobretot, pel Llibre de Fortuna e Prudència», *Quaderns Crema*, 1989, n.º 2, pp. 17-57; ID., «Bernat Metge i els 'auctores': del material de construcció al producte elaborat», *Butlletí de la Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona*, 1991-1992, n.º 43, pp. 25-40; ID., and LAMUELA X., (eds.), *Obra Completa de Bernat Metge*, Barcelona: Selecta, 1983; METGE, B., *Book of Fortune and Prudence*, Barcelona-London: Barcino-Tamesis, 2011 [David Barnett (trans.)]; BUTIÑÁ, J., «Un nou nom per al vell del Llibre de Fortuna e Prudència», *Butlletí de la Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona*, 1989-1990, n.º 42, pp. 221-226; ID., «Una volta per les obres de Metge de la mà de Fortuna e Prudència», *Estudis de Llengua i Literatura Catalanes*, 1993, n.º XXVI, pp. 45-70; BUTIÑÁ, J., «El paso de Fortuna por la Península durante la baja Edad Media», *Medievalismo. Boletín de la Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales*, 1993, n.º 3, pp. 209-232; CABRÉ, Ll., «Comentaris sobre Bernat Metge i la seva primera consolació: El Llibre de Fortuna e Prudència», in VV.AA., *Intellectuals i escriptors a la Baixa Edat Mitjana*, Barcelona: Curial Edicions Catalanes-Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1994, pp. 95-107; METGE, B., *Llibre de Fortuna e Prudència*, Barcelona: Barcino, 2010 [Lluís Cabré (ed.)]; FLEMING, J., «The major source of Bernat Metge's Libre de Fortuna e Prudència», *Journal of Hispanic Philology*, 1982, n.º 7, pp. 5-13; MARCO ARTIGAS, M., «La data de l'1 de maig de 1381 en el "Libre de Fortuna e Prudència" de Bernat Metge: realitat, folklore popular, reminiscències de Dant o mer tòpic literari», *Revista de Llengües y Literaturas catalana, gallega y vasca*, 2005, n.º 11 pp. 13-16; ID., «Bernat Metge i Job: dos rebels amb causa però amb resolucions diferents», *Revista de Llengües y Literaturas catalana, gallega y vasca*, 2005, n.º 11, pp. 17-27; ID., «La pastoreta, Fèlix, el llop i Bernat Metge: a propòsit de l'episodi inicial del Libre de Meravelles de Ramon Llull», *Revista de Llengües y Literaturas catalana, gallega y vasca*, 2007-2008, n.º 13, pp. 219-226; MARCO ARTIGAS, M., «Una Prudència agustiniana en el Llibre de Fortuna i Prudència de Bernat Metge», *Estudis de Llengua i Literatura catalanes*, 2009, n.º LVIII, pp. 21-32; METGE, B., *El llibre de Fortuna e Prudència*, Barcelona: Real Academia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona, 2010 [Miquel Marco (ed.)]; MEDINA, J., «Sobre la presència de sant Agustí als Països Catalans», *Revista de la Facultat de Lletres de la Universitat de Girona*, 2001, n.º 21, pp. 443-445; NEPAULSINGH, C., «Bernat Metge's Libre de Fortuna e Prudència and the literary tradition of the goddess Fortuna», in VV.AA., *Catalan Studies, Volume in memory of J. de Boer, Gulsoy*, Barcelona: Borràs, 1977, pp. 203-207; OLIVAR, M., *Obres menors de Bernat Metge i Anselm Turmeda*, Barcelona: Barcino, 1927; DE RIQUER, M., *Història de la Literatura Catalana*, Barcelona: Ariel, 1964; ID., *Obras de Bernat Metge*, Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 1959.

14 DE TORROELLA, G. and COMPAGNA, A. M. (ed.), *La faula per Guillem de Torroella*, Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat-Edicions UIB, 2007.

character); the *Roman de la Rose* (ca. 1230-1275) (in both works the characters must abandon their places of residence and there are somber descriptions of a nature in disarray as well as reflections on the meaning of Christian poverty); the *Anticlaudianus* by Alain de Lille (ca. 1181-1184)¹⁵, (particularly books VII and VIII) (an allegorical poem in which Nature proposes the creation of a *new perfect man* to substitute current humanity, which has fallen into sin); Arrigo de Settimello's *Elegia de diversitate fortunae et philosophiae consolatione*¹⁶ (ca. f. 12th c.), (a collection of maxims and reflections on how to avoid ill-Fortune); the biblical *Book of Job*¹⁷ (which includes moral and philosophical considerations on the nature of good and evil as well as on divine justice); Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae* (ca. 524) (with poignant reflections on the nature of Fortune, Prudence, evil and divine justice); Augustinian thought as represented in works such as *De natura boni*, *Confessiones*, *De libero arbitrio*, *De civitate Dei*, and *De moribus manichaeorum*; and Lull's philosophy, in particular his *Llibre de Meravelles*.

Book of Fortune and Prudence, as Metge's masterpiece *Lo Somni*, could be seen as constructed on a biographical anecdote. As Metge had lost favor in the royal court and was accused of wrongdoing, he tried to gain back his lost favor by writing a work set within the parameters of a consolatory treatise. Prudence's tirade against money, usury and avarice give this consolatory and allegorical poem the meaning of a "dissatisfaction with the transient nature of material wealth and its concomitant esteem"¹⁸.

The book was also probably composed as a prelude to Metge's *Lo Somni*. As such, it is a reflection on the inanity of defending Fortune's power in the midst of adversity as well as a hymn to the liberty of human free will. While set within the parameters of medieval philosophical and literary reflections on *Prudence* and *Synderesis*, if we view *The Book of Fortune and Prudence* within the new context of Italian Humanism Metge's work stands out as a proclamation of the human spirit in the turbulence of unforseeable life circumstances. The foreboding nature of Fortune's Island contrasts with the calmness of waters of the port of Barcelona, that is the inner space of the character's quieted and reflective mind. It is there that he finds the strength derived from his critical power (his own reason) to raise himself above the tumult of the here and now.

As Metge characterizes Prudence's lessons in his poem, they bespeak of the liberty that derives from the independence of the human will when built upon human critical reason. This detachment from the turmoil of life and recession into the inner spaces of one's own reason (the lesson to be learned from Metge's *Book of Fortune and Prudence*) is presented in the poem as a task set against a landscape of stormy waters, telluric imagery and medieval allegory. Very likely inspired by similar personal circumstances, *Lo Somni* builds upon Metge's *Book of Fortune and Prudence* to insist on the same message, although now framed within the new literary humanist parameters: dialogue vs. dream allegory. Job's patience and *fortitude*, Boethius' philosophical consolation amidst misfortune, and Aquinas' *synderesis* and free will are the points of departure of Metge's dream allegory that takes the character from his leisurely stroll through the streets of Barcelona and deposits him back there after a wondrous but invigorating experience. After the tumultuous journey, the initial fear of spiraling into chaos is superseded by a self-suggested *quietudo* which is very much a product of Metge's own intellectual prowess and *volitio*.

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15 OF LILLE, A., *Alanus de Insulis*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994 [Frances Horgan (ed.)].

16 SEPTIMELLENSIS [SETTIMELLO], *Elegia*, Bergamo: Atlas, 1949 [Giovanni Cremaschi (ed.)].

17 MARTÍN NIETO, E. (dir.), *La santa biblia*, Madrid: Ediciones Paulinas, 1992 [Libro de Job].

18 METJE, B., *The Book of Fortune and Prudence...*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

4. IMAGERY OF WATER IN THE *LLIBRE DE FORTUNA I PRUDÈNCIA*

In order to convey his message in the *Llibre de Fortuna i Prudència*, Metge uses the imagery of Water as a powerful symbol. The journey from the port of Barcelona and back is nothing but a narrative of the human fall and redemption, the life journey from an original state of peaceful innocence and grace to a return to Paradise. Human frailty and the turmoil of life as strife and deceitfulness are both represented through different images of water, from the peaceful and tranquil surface of the city's port to the ravages of stormy waters surrounding the perils of the isle of Fortune. The transition from tranquil to rough waters has an abundant biblical basis, as the readers of Metge would have been quick to recognize, making of his narrative a pseudo-hagiographical discourse with the tripartite structure typical of the lives of saints. And as the water of baptism and salvation occupies a particular place of honor in the Bible, Metge's journey to pseudo-sainthood also takes place amidst this symbolic liquid.

The work opens with a clear baptismal metaphor that suggests that the author has plunged into life with the impending feeling of doom and pain (life as a valley of tears). Metge-the-character wakes up on May 1st feeling unwell. He washes his face and hands with fresh water but immediately notices a strong pain in his heart and develops a high fever. Thinking of possible remedies, he decides to go for a leisurely walk by the sea at the port of Barcelona. After he has sailed for a while in his feeble boat, the weather turns for the worse, the wind picks up. «The boat», he says, «felt like a basket or a ripped bag, for the water that entered through one hole came out through another and the waves made the boat jump so high that it seemed to be flying»¹⁹. But his travails have only started. He finds temporary respite in the Isle of Fortune, although it proves only an apparent peaceful interlude as a storm rages around and the waters surrounding the island mount so high that they cover the peak where he stands uprooting plants, flowers and fruits altogether.

As the storm abates, he finds that at the highest point of the island there was a large grove planted with different trees and river running through it. In fact, two rivers were born in this place. They had opposite natures with regard to color, direction, and taste. After he had had a little drink -for his thirst was insatiable- from the one that looked and tasted more agreeably, his body developed dropsy and he was in mortal danger. Drinking made him burn inside and the more he drank, the more thirst he experienced. And yet he could not take his eyes off such beautiful river. The other one was not as charming nor as pleasant, but its water tasted more bitter than if it had been mixed with bile. This one seemed to want to rival the clouds in the sky, for he could not discern nor make sense of how it flowed up and then ran down with a most terrible and frightening roar. He had to drink from this river, even though it gave off fumes of burning sulfur, because he could not find a place where I could be cured of his illness and also because his pressing thirst was taking away his appetite. Metge was immediately cured as soon as he drank from this river, which restored his health. A little further down this river joined the other one and both followed a single course, despite each of them having a different and separate source.

After his encounter with Fortune and the Seven Maidens, Metge finds himself in the same situation that prompted his dream/vision («I was at the beginning when the sea and the contrary

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¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

wind made my head spin around»)²⁰. Nonetheless, now he is sailing back home after having experienced stormy seas, having tasted the more agreeable water and the sulphurous potion from the bitter river.

CONCLUSION

Baptismal water, Paradise water, hellish, sulphuric water signal the character's journey and experience of prosperous and adverse Fortune. Only when he regains his reason, dispells his unfounded fears, trusts in God and in himself he is able to return to the calm waters of the safe haven of the Barcelona port. We must also remember that water held a particular relevance for Catalan and Aragonese society, as the Kingdom of Aragon came to play a powerful role in 13th through 15th-centuries European affairs as a great maritime power through its conquest of Sicily and parts of Greece and its attainment of a commercial place of honour²¹. Water and voyage, thus, became metaphors for life and commerce; water as turmoil and water as balsamic quietude represent the vagaries of man's inner psyche through the difficulties of life, as well as the ups and downs of the fortunes of states and kingdoms through the perils of trade and commerce across the Mediterranean sea.

In sum, through his use of the water metaphor, Metge builds a message full of biblical and literary resonances in the midst of difficult personal circumstances. As he tries to find solace in his troubled life, he brings home for his Aragonese audience a consolatory piece that reflects on *prospera et adversa Fortuna* and the power of human reason and will through the repeated image of water, an element that encapsulated life itself for the inhabitants of Barcelona as a carrier of prosperity and adversity.

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²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

²¹ ABULAFIA, D., *The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms, 1250-1500. The Struggle for Dominion*, London and New York: Longman, 1997; BISSON, T. N., *The Medieval Crown of Aragon. A Short History*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1986; MACKAY, A., *Spain in the Middle Ages: From Frontier to Empire, 1000-1500*, London: Macmillan, 1977; RIU, M., «Banking and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Aragon», in VVAA., *The Dawn of Modern Banking*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1979; VICENS I VIVES, J., *Els Trastàmars (segle XV)*, Barcelona: Edicions Vicens-Vives, 1980.

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