

Double Alterity in a Celebratory Sonnet on the Battle of Lepanto

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The impact of the battle of Lepanto on the Western, Christian imagination is perhaps difficult to gauge in our day but it proved a rallying cry for triumphant post-Tridentine, Counter-Reformation Roman Catholicism for centuries. The battle itself, on October 17, 1571 conducted in the gulf of Patras lasted a mere five hours, in which the Holy League –composed of Spain, under Philip II (1527-98), and its Italian possessions, Venice, Genoa, the Papacy under Pope Pius V (1504-72), and the Duchy of Savoy– decisively routed the Ottoman forces. For a fleeting moment it would seem that Christendom was safe from the Turkish menace, unwielding and unstoppable since the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and feared just as much on land as on the seas.¹ For a few short years the Catholic powers of the fledgling Holy League could bask in their victory. The Turk represented a definite constant other for Early Modern Europe and the specter of the ever menacing Turk after its infamous incursions into and occupation of Otranto in 1480 and 1537 and its several, albeit always frustrated attempts to conquer Vienna, notably in 1528 under Suleiman the Magnificent (1494-1566).² Testimony to the staying power of the event in the Christian imagination is G. K. Chesterton's (1874-1936) composition of 1911 and the constant scholarly concern with the battle, notably evident for example in the many dense pages written by Fernand Braudel in the *The Mediterranean in the Age of Philip II*, in which he described the watershed event in painstaking detail (Braudel 469-514).³

The idea of the Turk as the ever-present menace against whom Pope and Princes organized crusades had, by the second half of the sixteenth century, thoroughly permeated the European imagination, especially during Suleiman's long reign (1520-66), a period during which the Ottoman ruler made a conscious effort to cultivate his image as *Magnificent* in the West (see Necipoğlu). The Sublime Gate had already inspired a considerable corpus of literary creation in which the Christian European imagination was able to give itself full reign while it set itself about ratifying stereotypes and certainties about an Ottoman Orient which remained unknown, terrifying, and reprehensible. It was cast as a world too far to reach, exotic, distant but also a constant threat to Christendom , able to constantly encroach upon the Christian

¹ I am indebted to Julio Alonso Asenjo for his help with some of the more difficult passages of the manuscript studied in this article. All translations of the text are mine. For an overview of Ottoman naval power throughout the sixteenth century see Brummet. The historiography of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century is immense. We signal only the following titles: Balfour, Abou-El-Haj, Goffman and Imber.

² On European attitudes towards the Ottoman Empire see Barton & Pears, Libby Jr., Goffman, Inalcik, Viallon and González Alcantud & Stoll.

³ For an account of the battle and its context see Bicheno and Lesure.

powers either as a direct military threat through invasion (especially the case in Central Europe), through pirating forays off the European coasts, or through dubious machinations on European soil. All the ills which seemed to beleaguer Christendom would seem to have some origin in the will of the Sultan and his minions.

The ascension of Selim “the Drunkard” (1524-74) to the sultanate in 1566 seemed to confirm all the preconceived images which were held of the Turks. A lover of vice, depravity, and carnal pleasures, effeminate and given only to the desires of the flesh, to constant debauchery and orgies, Selim seemed the prototype of what the slothen, unruly Turk was for Christian imaginations and pens. Such attitudes were exemplified in poetical works following upon the heels of Lepanto, notably numerous satirical poems addressed to Selim, mockingly taking him to task on account of his wantonness and stubbornness in defending and adhering to a false religion, and his hatred of the Christian faith (Quarti 111-40).

The Battle of Lepanto and its celebration in sixteenth-century literature

It is no wonder that the battle of Lepanto, upon the heels of the loss of Cyprus to the Ottomans in 1570, should have been considered just as much a victory against the constant foe as against a hated and reviled personage. The Turk’s fleet was largely in shambles, its once feared power stripped of its glory, if even for a short time. It lost 201 of its almost 300 ships and close to 15,000 men. This Ottoman devastation was to last but a short time. They were to recuperate from the loss a short time afterwards and the resolve of the Holy league was to last only until 1574 when Venice, in a demonstration of typical Venetian realism, signed a separate peace with the Turkish foe. Historians are still in dispute as to the lasting effects the battle were to really have on the balance of power in the Mediterranean.⁴

Lepanto inspired a flurry of poetic inspiration in a variety of languages, particularly among the victorious countries comprising the Holy League. It provoked a flurry of poetical activity in Italy, inspiring some of the most formidable pens of the second half of the sixteenth century, and leading to a feverish production in the visual arts, with paintings and sculpture representing both scenes of the battle and the individual members of the Holy League involved.⁵ This artistic production was expressed in the various dialects used for literary works in the Italian peninsula, chief among them, of course, the Tuscan model which, by the end of the sixteenth century had largely gained domination against all its rivals. Alongside works in the *volgare*,

⁴ For a perspective on the importance of the battle in the context of European-Ottoman relations in the sixteenth century, see Hess 1972.

⁵ See Dionisotti, López de Toro, and Lefevre. For the influence on the visual arts see, in particular, Gibellini 75-111. Among the many Italian poets dealing with this topic, we could mention Pietro Gherardi, Bernardino Capitano, Horacio Rigalaccio, Aurelio Orsi, Antonio Rosaneo, Bernardino Leoni, Jano Pelusio, Antonio Oritheo, Sebastian San Leoni, Francesco Ferrario, Numa Pompilio Fino, Augusto Flaminio Campeggio, Pompeius Hugonio, Bernardino Parthenio, J. A. Viperanio, J. Ludovici, J. D. Cantiani, Antonio Reniero, etc.

poems were written in Latin to celebrate the event by humanists with, naturally, a particular stress on the cultivation of epic poetry and drama (Gibellini 56-74). Along with the celebration of the event as a manifestation of divine favour accorded to the forces of the Holy League, the literary production was rife in stressing the triumph of Christianity and the depreciation of the Muslim faith with parodies of alleged Islamic beliefs and practices, mocking Turkish customs, society, rulers, and officials (Gibellini 73; López de Toro 138-60).

The immediate aftermath of the battle provoked, quite understandably, a number of compositions in Castilian on the subject as well, among them some works penned by some of the principle poets of the day such as Fernando de Herrera's (1534-97) *Canción en alabança de la divina magestad por la vitoria del Señor Don Juan* (1591) in addition to influencing works by Cristóbal Virués (1550-1614), Vicente Espinel (1550-1624), Cristobalina Fernández de Alarcón (1576-1646) and Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo (1581-1635). It inspired a celebratory Latin poem composed by the Granada-based black humanist Juan Latino (1518-1596) dedicated to Philip II and published in Granada in 1573 (Maurer 1993) as well as poetical works in Latin by the likes of Jaime Juan Falcó (1522-94) and Juan López de Hoyos (1511-83).⁶ The year 1573 saw the publication of *La singular y admirable victoria que per la gracia de N.S.D. obtingue el Serenissimo Senyor don Juan D'Austria de la potentissima armada Turquesca* in Catalan, by Joan Pujol Prevere de Mataro (1514-1604) published in Barcelona. Years later, in 1584, Juan Rufo (1547-1630) published his epic poem *La Austriada* in which he also commemorated the great Christian victory over the infidel foe in the context of a composition which celebrated the exploit of king Philip II's half brother Don Juan de Austria (1545-78) (Davis). Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616) who had lost the use of a hand in the battle was to evoke the event in the second part of *Don Quijote* (1614). The spell of the battle in the literary imagination surpassed the sixteenth century. It was later evoked, for example, in a seventeenth century play *La Santa Liga* by Lope de Vega (1603) and *El águila del agua* by Luis Vélez de Guevara (1642), among others.

It is no wonder that the Spanish, in particular, were to have special stakes in the victory of the Turk in the battle. For the Iberian nation the Turkish menace was something very close to home. Feared Turkish pirate raids on Spain's coasts were all too frequent, inhabiting the popular imagination following in the wake of the feared Barbary pirate Barbarossa (1478-1546). More pressing for Philip II was the threat of Ottoman intervention on Spain's soil through the *morisco* rebellion in the Alpujarra region which broke out in 1568 and which was only quelled by the actions of Don Juan de Austria in 1570, one year before the battle of Lepanto and in which he was to prove one of the key commanders (Hess 1968).

⁶ On the Battle of Lepanto in Spanish literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries see in particular López de Toro. This author analyses as well numerous Italian, Latin, and Catalan compositions on the topic from this period.

A bergamasque celebratory sonnet of Lepanto

Among the poetic collections published in the wake of the battle was a series of texts which came out in Venice in 1572, entitled the *Raccolta di vari poemi latini, greci e volgari. Fatti da diversi bellissimi ingegni nel la felice vittoria riportata da Cristiani contra Turchi alli 7 d'ottobre del 1571*. These compositions, in the Venetian and other Italian dialects, celebrated the defeat of the Turk at the hands of the partially Venetian-led force. It contained, among other works, a celebratory sonnet attributed to a certain Dottor Zambò de Val Brembiana, in which the Holy League's victory was evoked and celebrated (Zanetti 2006). As such the sonnet was not particularly original; it is, in fact, similar in wording and in spirit to other poems contained in another collection of texts found in the Marciana library.⁷

The work had, however, the particularity of being in several languages or linguistic varieties: Tuscan, Latin, and with trappings of the North Italian dialect from the Bergamo region known as *Bergamasco*, along with parodies of Arabic words and names, particularly relating to Islamic beliefs and practices. The language present in the sonnet would seem to be a kind of parody of the Bergamasque dialect which had its own history of literary production, though certainly within the totality of the literary production of the Italian peninsula it was one of the less well-known and used.⁸ The name of the author would seem to evoke such an origin, being from the Brembana Valley in the Bergamo region. He was not altogether unknown, being attributed a Bergamasque version of the first *canto* of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* published in 1550 and later reprinted in 1552. (Salvioni 1904, 5-6), (Ferrazzi 1881, 167-68).

⁷ See especially the "Successo della felice vittoria che ha conseguito l'armata cristiana con la turchesca."

Ben, sier, Selin, sela sta de veluo
La cricca de sti nostri batizai
Sessanta mile turchi e renegai
Con trecento to vele se andà in bruo
Caronte, aspetta l'aneme al palvo
D'Ali, Piali, co i altri Alaberlai
Fa che'l Miches con quei to Bassai,
miegega la schincada che ti abuo
Che pensavistu a meter a minchion
La Italia e Spagna, con la to canaia?
E a Cristo creder che puoda Macon?
Roma, l'Aquila e'l Lion con le griffe
Passar el stretto no stima una paia,
si che aspetta a sentir, tof, taffe e tiff" (Quarti 128-29).

⁸On the Bergamasque dialect see Tiraboschi, Mora, and Zanetti 2004.

In its version in the Venetian book of 1572 the sonnet reads this way:

A Selì gran turc

Quae pars est, o Selì Salamelèch
 Da l'uniù del Hic, et Haec et Hoc?
 Sessantamila de quei tuo Tarlòch
 Co tresent galei son stag a stech

E j'anime t'aspetta ilò a Lamech
 D'Ali, Piali, Caracossa e Siroc,
 Perché in Bizanz, né in Alger o Maroc
 Te se sigur de sti gran Scanderbech

Pensavet forse havì a fa co merlot,
 O con zent co'ti e ti usag al bif
 Despresiador del Santo Sabaoth

L'aquila con Leó col bech e i grifi,
 Te squazarà ol cur del magot;
 Sta mò a sentì el tof, el taf, el tif.⁹

An English rendering of the sonnet could be as follows:

What do you obtain Selim, Salamalech?
 from the union of the hic, haec and the hoc.
 Sixty thousand of your men have died
 Along with three hundred galleys which are destroyed

And the souls are waiting for you in Mecca
 of Ali, Piali, Caracossa and Siroch
 neither in Bizantium, nor in Algeria or Morocco
 are you safe from the great valor of the new Scanderbech

Perhaps you thought you were dealing with fools
 or with people accustomed to drink?

⁹ I reproduce the transcription of the poem offered in Zanetti 2006. I must thank Dr Zanetti for all his valid suggestions and kind advice in the comprehension of the poem during private correspondence which we shared.

vilifier of the God of power and might
 But the eagle, the lion and the griffin
 will pull your heart out from your chest;
 now listen to the tof, taf and tif.

The author of the sonnet thus proposed a composition which was half celebration, half parody of the defeated Muslim enemy. The text is filled with allusions to alleged Islamic practices, to real-life characters who took part in the battle, and to the events of October 7 itself. Thus the sonnet is addressed in a question, half mockingly to the sultan Selim. It is to him that the question about what was gained from the battle is posed and later followed by an accusation, namely that of sending sixty thousand men to their deaths and his being responsible for the destruction of 300 galleys. The Turkish names mentioned in the sonnet are, of course, of the Ottoman commanders who took part in the battle. Ali is Mehemed Ali-Pasha, the commander of the Ottoman fleet in Lepanto, who died in the exploit. Piali is the infamous Calabrian renegade Piali Murad also known as Ucchiali or Ucciali, born Giovanni Dionigi Galeni (1519-87). Caracossa is Kara Hodja or Caracoz, the Turkish pirate, notorious and feared for attacks in the gulf of Venice. Siroch was Mohammed Saulac, the Ottoman captain who perished in Lepanto. Scanderbech is of course Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu (1405-68), the mythical fifteenth-century Albanian resistance fighter against the Turks.

The figurative Sanderbech against which Selim will have no respite who is alluded to in the text was none other than the Christian hero of the day, Don Juan of Austria (1547-78). That Don Juan was the inspiration behind the sonnet is borne out in at least one manuscript version of the work, in which, in a yet unpublished sixteenth-century Spanish language translation of the *Dialoghi d'amore* by Leone Ebreo (1460-1525 ca) it appears along with three other poetical compositions. In fact, he entitles the work *Ageno en la victoria de Don Juan* (Homage for Don Juan's victory) (Nelson Novoa 25). A marginal note informs us that the "tof, taf, tif" is an example of onomatopoeia, with "tof" representing artillery, "taf" arquebuses and "tif" the sound of stabbing, presumably during the fateful battle (Nelson Novoa 25).

A Spanish commentary on the sonnet

There are several other manuscript versions of the work which can be dated around the years following the battle.¹⁰ One of these is contained in a manuscript including several miscellaneous works in Spanish, held in the Barberini manuscript collection of the Vatican Library, created in the Seventeenth Century by the cultured Florentine cardinal and patron of the arts and learning, Francesco Barberini (1597-1679), where it is catalogued as Barberini Latina manuscript 3602.¹¹ The author of the short work is

¹⁰ Another would seem to be preserved in the National Library of Florence in ms. II, IX, 45, fols. 231-32. See Mazzatinti, Pintor 269.

¹¹ For a description of the manuscript and the other works in it see Jones 136-40.

impossible to identify, as is that of the copyist. It is not clear when the work was composed, though there is a passing allusion to the battle as having taken place "...a los siete de octubre passado..." (on the seventh of this past October) which would seem to indicate it was written at least within a year after the battle (Ms. Barberini latino 3602, fol. 12r). The handwriting would seem to date from the later decades of the sixteenth century. The only title is *Comento del Repetunio, al sonetto Que pars est?* (Commentary on the Sonnet Que pars est?). Occupying a mere nine folios, the author of the work offers literally that: an interpretation of what the celebratory sonnet really meant, an elucidation of the author's intentions, in Spanish. Curiously, the manuscript provides two different variant reading of the sonnet. One is presented at the very beginning of the text:

Sonneta al Turco
 Que pars est Selim, Salamelech?
 De l'union del hic et huc et hoc?
 Sessanta mila di quei tuoi tarloch?
 Con trecento galee son stat a stech

Et t'aspettono l'alme entra a lamech
 Ali, Piali, Caracossa e Siroch
 Guarda Bizanzi, Algier pure Maroch
 Del gran valor del nuovo Scanderbech

Pensabi haver a fare con merlot
 O con lanecht usati al bif

Ma l'aquila e'l leon col bech el grif
 Ti squzaranno 'l cor for del magot
 Hor sta a sentir el tof, el taf el tif. (Ms. Barberini latino 3602. fol. 11v)

This version of the sonnet differs from the Venetian edition in wording and spelling. The second line of the poem would seem to be in Spanish, or at least it would seem to have been interpreted as being so by the author of the commentary. In this presentation of the text the first line in the last tercet is missing. The prose commentary itself is divided into eleven chapters in which the author explains the meaning of the sonnet and goes over it line by line, scrutinizing the sense of every word contained in it. In the commentary in which the lines of the sonnet appear throughout the text, the author provides yet another version of the poem:

Que pars est Selim, Salamalech
 De la union del hic et hec et hoc?
 Sessanta milia, de quei toi starloch

Con trecento galee son state a stech

E l'aspetano le alme entro a la mech
 Ali, Piali, Caracosa, Siroch
 Garda, Bisançio, Alguier, pure Marochj
 Dal gran valor del nuovo Scanderbech

Forse pensavi a fare con merlot
 O con lanzichenech usati al bif
 Dispregiator del santo sabaoch

L'aquila et il leon col bech el grif
 Ti saquarano il cor fuor del magot
 Hor è sta a sentir il tof, if tal, if tif. (Ms. Barberini latino 3602. fols. 14r-18v)

From the beginning of his commentary on the sonnet the author states that his task is double: that of explaining the content of the sonnet and of the language in which it is written, likening himself to Pico della Mirandola (1463-94) in his commentary on the sonnet on love by Giralomo Benivieni (1453-1542), who saw as his task that of elucidating what the poetic text was dealing with.¹² Calling the sonnet simply “Sonetto al turco” he claims to know the name of the author but will not divulge it to his

¹² “A los que tienen la pérdida del tiempo por la mayor en la brevedad y incertidumbre de esta muerte que se llama bida por bentura parecerá dislate y aun disparate havarse ocupado algún hombre de entendimiento en comentar una cosa de tan poca dificultad y importancia como es esta. Parece a prima facie más los que están acostumbrados de passar de la letra al espíritu, no se mobiendo por el afeite (como suelen los hombres de corta bista). Pero buscando, como dicen, a Mercurio en el corazón y no en la lengua, seguro estoy que no tendrán por perdido el rato gastado en la compendiosa explicación de este sonetto tan abundante de buenos conceptos y primores misteriosos quan falta de estilo elegante y de palabras escondidas, y tengo por cierto que los unos y los otros de qual manera me tendrán por excusado no siendo nuevo aun a gravísimos autores por vía de semejantes exerçicios entremeter alguna inbición en sus cuidados como lo hizo el Pico Mirandulano glosando la canción del Gerónimo Benivieni y los muchos doctos a los quales he querido imitar en dar esta floxa [sic] intelectual a los estudios más graves y máximamente entendiendo que en ello satisfago a los ruegos de persona a quien, con raçón, no puedo dejar de obedecer” (Ms. Barberiniano Latino 3602, fol. 11r) [For those who consider it a waste of time in the brevity and uncertainty of this death which is called life it will seem foolish to have busied a man of intelligence with commenting a matter of such little difficulty and importance as this. It would seem so at first glance but that those are used to going from the letter to the spirit and not being moved by the affections (as the short-sighted tend to do). Yet searching, as it is said, Mercury in the heart and not in the tongue, I am sure that they will not consider a waste of time the compendious explanation of this sonnet, so filled with great concepts and mysterious ability as it is lacking in elegant style and with obscure words. And I consider that everyone will equally excuse me, not being new to serious authors through similar exercises to attempt to dedicate themselves to such endevours as did Pico della Mirandola in glossing the *canzona* by Girolomo Benivieni and the many erudite authors whom he wanted to imitate in going from this intellectual exercise to higher studies I satisfy the requests of people whom I cannot disobey].

readers, limiting himself only to the exegesis of the text itself which, as he claims, was written to celebrate the recent victory over the Turk.¹³

The author of the commentary does not hide his perplexity with regards to certain aspects of the poetic text yet he always offers an answer for the seeming confusion. In the fourth chapter of the commentary, entitled *Que a las vezez la novedad y extrabagança del estilo añade misterioso donaire y enrarecimiento a la composición* (That at times the novelty and extravagance of the style adds grace and rarity to the composition) the author deals with the form of the sonnet and its wording. He claims that its singularity comes from its being composed in multiple languages, something, of course not unknown among poets at the time, both in Spain and in Italy.¹⁴ He confesses an initial perplexity on account of the fact that one of these languages be the variety of the Bergamasque dialect, which, according to the commentator makes the verses seem imperfect and barbarous because they come from the most ridiculous language of Italy.

According to the commentator, the author of the sonnet chose the Bergamasque dialect on account of its humility and lowness, which therefore emphasizes and

¹³ “Pero al presente se callará el nombre y calidades porque poco aña al caso saberlas y porque él, a sabiendas, quiso encubrirlas. Pero tocando las demás vrevemente digo que la intención del poeta y el subjeto de la obra fue el triunfo del turco vencido. Y conforme a eso sabe que el mismo sonetto no contiene más de un conpendioso alarde de la presa y una regocigada representación de la señaladíssima vitoria que fue Dios serbido dar a los cristianos por mar a los siete de octubre passado junto con las amenaças y consequencias della, que son las principales cosas que suelen representarse en los verdaderos triunfos. El título dice *Sonetto al turco* y es de notar que por dos raçones principales: quiso el autor en este propósito usar más de sonetto que de ningún otro género de composición vulgar, lo uno porque su intento era comprender en pocas palabras grandes cosas, y entre las trovas bulgares no ai otra que en tan pocos versos sea capaz de tanta significación y artificio como el sonetto; la otra porque el sonetto, si bien se considera, es composición septendava [sic], pues es compuesta de quartenarios y tercitos y son las partes dél siete y por consiguiente aplicable por la conformidad del número al memorable día séptimo en que se alcançó la gran vitoria que dio materia a este sonetto, por no tener un siete sólo sino dos, constituidos de dos quadernarios y dos tercets, porque quatro y tres son números de grandíssimo encarecimiento” (Ms. Barberiniano Latino 3602, fols.11v-12r) [At the present time I will not mention the name of the author because it is not important to know it and little does it reveal about why he composed it. I will say, nonetheless, that the intention of the poet and the subject of the work was the triumph over the defeated Turk. The sonnet itself contains an all-comprising celebration of the battle and a joyous representation of the victory which God conceded to the Christians at sea last year on the seventh of October along with the threats and consequences of it which are the principle things which are usually represented in true victories. The title is the ‘Sonnet to the Turk’ and it must be noted for two reasons: the author chose the form of the sonnet to speak of great things in few words. Among poetical works there is no other which, in so few verses, is capable of having so many meanings and artifice like the sonnet. The other is that the sonnet, being a composition which is divided into seven parts as it is composed of quatrains and tercets are, altogether, the parts of seven which are thus applicable to the memorable seventh day on which the great victory took place which provided the matter for this sonnet on account of not having seven but rather only two, constituted by two quatrains and two tercets because four and three are numbers of great value].

¹⁴ In chapter five he mentions the examples of Garcilaso de la Vega, Petrarch, and Dante. Ms. Barberiniano Latino 3602, fol. 14v.

exalts the heroic content of the work by contrasting the subject dealt with the means of expression. By choosing this fragile instrument, an Italian dialect of little or no prestige, the author of the work seeks to greater celebrate the wondrous feat of the Christian victory over the Turk at Lepanto. The use of parody of Turkish words and names is part of this, which, according to him, serves to further stress the Christian triumph over the Muslim foe.¹⁵ According to him the use of these seemingly

¹⁵ “En la corteza deste sonetto, si bien se examina con las reglas y medidas de la poesía ordinaria, se podrá notar muchas tachas y groserías ansí en los versos como en las palabras, porque los versos todos parecen imperfectos en los acentos y casi en las medidas y en las pausas y en las palabras, porque los versos todos parecen imperfectos y las palabras casi todas bárbaras o tomadas de la más ridícula lengua de Italia, donde se sigue que o fue compuesto por algún idiota y acaso o por consiguiente es de poquíssima estima, o le hiço algún poco entendimiento con gran y particular consideración, lo qual, por lo arriba dicho y por lo que abajo se dice, es mucho más verisímil, y es pensado que, queriendo tratar el autor de una vitoria tan señalada, la qual nenguna sea bista en mar y qual ni semejante no le parecía que cumplía con la excelencia del subjeto sin aciendo el sonetto tan singular que no tubiese semejanza ni ygualdad con los otros sonetos ordinarios, pareciéndole más proporcionado al subjeto y más significador quanto más fuerza sea de las reglas usadas y sabidas (pero no de la ración y berdaderamente a bitoria tan insólita y tan nueva son debidos versos y cantares insólitos llenos de nuevas, misteriosas observanças para que la nobedad y extravagancia del verso pasemos con deleite y considerar con atención y marabilla lo que se trata, lo que es amonestación y documento, no sólo de los poetas profanos pero aun de los que nos convidan a cantar las marabillas divinas, con cantares nuebos inauditos). Y ciertamente la maravillosa pohesía del autor fue marabillosa en escoger tales palabras y tal estilo para tratar de una grande alegría y de una gran bitoria, porque, quanto a lo primero, propio suele ser de hombres que de repente an abido alguna buena nueva, saltar, vailar y hazer visajes y niñerías como parece qu'este soneto ba haciendo con las palabras, no acaso, sino con grande arte; y quanto a lo segundo, no es menos natural a los vencedores el molestar aunque sean bitorias de burlas como es la del axedrez, la qual también representa en su discurso este ingeniosísimo sonetto, cuya perfección y excelencia (como consiste en extravagancia) no se puede medir ni escodriñar con las reglas conoçidas sino con las excitantes calidades del subjeto, el qual procuró el autor quanto pudo coresponder no sólo con el concepto, pero aun con el sonido, y vencerla de palabras y aun con el extrabagante artificio de los versos; y así se be claramente que con industria mezcló diversidad de lenguajes” (Ms. Barberiniano Latino 3602, fols. 13r-v). [If we study this sonnet with the rules and measures of ordinary poetry we can perceive many faults and inadequacies in the verses and in the words because the verses all seem imperfect in their rhymes and even in the measures, the pauses and the words because the words seem all imperfect and the words barbarous and taken from the most ridiculous language of Italy from which it follows that, either it was composed by an idiot or someone of low esteem or it was written by someone with little intelligence with great or particular consideration, which, according to what we have said and according to what will be said below, is much more plausible and it is thought that the author, wanting to deal with so celebrated a victory which was like none other seen at sea did not seem to have its excellence sufficiently described if the sonnet was not, in some way, singular, if it were not above all the other ordinary sonnets. It thus seemed more proportionate to the subject and has greater meaning the more force there is in the rules used and known (but not that of reason and truly a victory so strange and new that it produces verses and strange songs filled with new, mysterious observations for the novelty and extravagance of the verse we pass on with delight and consider that which is considered with attention and marvel, not only by amateur poets but also those who invite us to celebrate divine wonders, with new, unknown songs and most certainly the poetry of the author was marvellous in choosing such words and style in order to express great joy and a great victory). With respect to the first it tends to be typical of men who, suddenly, having received good news, jump, dance,

contrasting languages in the sonnet, with words in Spanish, Latin, Tuscan, the Bergamasque dialect and in Arabic, although in reality the kind of parody of Arabic used in the text serves to evoke the many languages which would have been spoken during the fateful battle. According to the sonnet's Spanish language commentator, the the beastly Turk is only deserving of mockery or ridicule.¹⁶

The commentator on the sonnet explains that the first line of the poem is to be interpreted as a mocking question akin to schoolmasters chiding children as the Turk aimed to construct a naval force to rival that of the Holy league, only to be thoroughly vanquished.¹⁷ The first line of the first quatrain in the sonnet begins in Latin and ends

and give themselves to all forms of childish behaviour as it would seem that this sonnet does with its words, not with great art. With respect to the second it is no less natural that the victors should participate in bothering others even if it be on account of victories of little account such as in a game of chess, which also is represented in this ingenious sonnet, whose perfection and excellence (which consists in extravagance) cannot be measured nor scrutinized with known rules but rather with the qualities of the subject which the author sought to depict, not only with the concept but with sounds and words and the extravagant use of verse and hence it be seen that he craftily used a diversity of languages].

¹⁶ “Conviene a saber, latín, español, toscano, bergamasco y arábigo, lo uno para hacer con tal variedad el sonetto muy hermoso en su estrabagancia y lo otro para representar en cierta manera la bariedad de boches de la batalla, en la qual todas las dichas y otras naciones mostraron gran valor contra el turco. De más desto el haber enhidio la mayor parte del sonetto de palabras bárbaras y groseras ya bueltas dellas puesto otras que no significan nada. Claro está que lo hiço porque hablaba con el turco y parecióle que el christiano gloriosíssimo por tan gran victoria o no es raçon que hable con aquella bestia o ya que le able sea para mofarle, lo qual se haze más propriamente que el turco con palabras ynproprias y de burla” (Ms. Barberiniano Latino 3602, fol. 13v) [It is useful to use Latin, Spanish, Tuscan, Bergamasque and Arabic, on the one hand, in order to create a beautiful sonnet in its extravagance and on the other hand to represent, in a certain way, the variety of tongues in the battle in which all nations showed great valour against the Turk. The author also filled the greater part of the sonnet with barbarous and vulgar words which signify nothing. Naturally he did this because he was addressing the Turk and it seemed to him that the Christian victory either was not a reason for speaking with that beast in or to mock him or that if he did have to speak with the Turk he would do so with improper words and in a mocking fashion].

¹⁷ “En esta primera parte del sonneto pregunta el christiano al turco como a persona experimentada qué la parece dél la Liga y esto no porque desee saberlo dél sino por lastimarle con la memoria de tan grande estrago y por darle a entender en quán poco le tienen, pues no obedece al mandamiento de que él ha hecho de que nadie sea osado hablalle en tal materia. ‘Que pars est?’ Esta pregunta suelen haçer los maestros de la gramática a los niños quando los examinan de algunas partes de la oración; y porque el turco, pensando construir su armada con la nuestra, quedó totalmente destruido, es bien preguntarle cómo animó ‘Que pars est?’ y enseñárselo con sangre, porque como dicen ‘la letra con sangre entra’ y porque él tenía por cierto que la Liga dese dinero no sería parte para resistille; bien es preguntarle ‘Que pars est?’, pues en toda la mar no le a quedado parte y si él fuese discreto bien conoçería que la Liga no es parte sino todo y que él sólo es la parte y dibidida para ser destruida de la potencia dese todo con el fabor de Dios, el qual no es parte sino todo, etc.” (Ms. Barberiniano Latino 3602, fols. 14r-14v) [In this first part of the sonnet the Christian asks the Turk what he thinks of the Holy League and not because he wants to know the answer but in order to harm him with the memory of so great a catastrophe and to let him know in how little esteem he holds him for he does not obey the commandment that no one should dare speak to him in such a way. ‘What part is it?’ This question is often asked by grammar teachers to children when they ask them about certain parts of a sentence and because the Turk, thinking to build a

in Arabic, according to the commentator, because it marks the conclusion of the work of the Holy league and their victory of Turk especially through the decisive contribution of Don John.¹⁸ The commentator of the sonnet throughout stresses the celebratory nature of the composition at the expense of the vanquished Turk. He sees the use of the Spanish language in the commentary as evoking the figure of Don Juan, who is credited with the victory at Lepanto. He goes on to explain the use of the Latin demonstrative masculine, feminine, and neuter pronouns *hic*, *haec* and *hoc* as symbolizing the participation of King Philip of Spain, the Church represented by the Pope, and Venice.¹⁹ The elucidator of the poem naturally does not spare the Turks and

naval force like ours, was thoroughly vanquished it is fitting to ask him ‘What part is it?’ For nothing has remained to him in all the sea and if he had been intelligent he would have known that the Holy league is not a part but all and that he is only the part and divided to be destroyed by force with the favour of God who is not a part but is all].

¹⁸ “Muchas cosas dinas de notar ai en este primer verso digno de ser alabado en prosa y en verso, y entre otras comienza en latín y acaba en arábigo, porque el admirable verso que la Liga hiço este año en el otro se comenzó y en Lepanto se acabó. Item que las dictiones latinas en que comienza son tres: porque los mayores potentados de la cristianidad que se juntaron a dar principio a tan heroyco verso fueron tres. Item que por ser las primeras palabras monosílabas corre poco el bero en el principio pero al fin corre más por los nombres arábigos, que son de más sílabas y de letras más líquidas, por que para que beniesse a coyuntar a la famosa vitoria, por lo qual este verso fue echo, combino que al principio que el invictíssimo don Juan de Austria tardase para que después el turco viniese a vela y remo ‘acometernos y biniendo por lana quedase como dicen trasquilado y conociese ‘Que pars est, Selim, Sala Melech?’” (Ms. Barberiniano Latino 3602, fols. 14v-15r) [There are many worthy things in this first verse in prose and in verse and among them is the fact that it begins in Latin and ends in Arabic because the admirable verse which the League did that year began and concluded at Lepanto. This is the same case with the Latin words which are three. This was so because the most important powers of Christendom which grouped together to begin such a historic verse were four. It was also on account of the fact that given that the first verbs are monosyllabic the verse does not run very much in the beginning but in the end it runs for the Arabic names which have more syllables and more liquid letters because in order to evoke the famous victory for which this verse was made it was fitting that the unvanquished Don Juan of Austria should be late so that in the end the Turk were to arrive with sails and oars like one coming to gather wool who is sheared and hence it is said “What part is it Selim, Sala Melech].

¹⁹ “De la unión etc. Parece que la cabeza deste segundo verso es el lenguaje español, porque asta en esto quiso el autor acello misterioso, denotando tácitamente con el sonido de las palabras que la cabeza y guía de la Liga es el sereníssimo Señor Don Juan, al qual, con raçon, se deve la gloria de bitoria tan señalada “Hic et hec et hoc etc.” Es pronombre demostrativo de cosas presentes, y porque la Liga tan presto dio de sí muestra tan notable, por eso con raçon es significada por “Hic et hec et hoc.” Antes ésta es grandísima alabança de la Liga, porque así como por hic et hec et hoc se demuestra quanto es posible demostrarse en todos los géneros, así en la Liga se halló junto quanto es posible demostrarse de religión, valor, fortaleça y prudencia y viniendo a la particular quadró muy vien “hic et hec et hoc” al rey Philipe, papa y venecianos, aplicando el género masculino al Rey como engendrador de príncipes defensores de la cristiandad y el femenino a la Iglesia, esposa de Jesus Christo, y el neutro a beneçianos, así por haber sido asta agora neutral como porque por ser república le conbiene más la demostración real del género neutro que no la persona de masculino o femenino” (Ms. Barberiniano Latino 3602, fol. 15r-15v) [‘For the union etc’. It would seem that the beginning of this second verse is in Spanish because with it the author wanted to render it mysterious, tacitly denoting with these words that the head and guide of the Holy League what the most serene Don Juan, who, rightly so, is to be attributed

their religion, alluding to fantastical prophesies about the final destruction of the Ottoman empire of which the battle of Lepanto, already foreseen, was but a foreshadowing.²⁰

The Spanish language commentator of the “Bergamasque” sonnet must grapple with the problem of explaining the poem and its contents. Written in an obscure Italian dialect of which readers would have little familiarity along with “Arabesque” trappings, the Spanish language commentator must try to make the meaning of the poem known to them. As such the sonnet would have presented itself to its readers, especially its potential Spanish readers, as an alien, strange, work, incomprehensible and in need of elucidation. The commentator of the sonnet in the manuscript in question takes this very task upon himself.

The world the sonnet was composed to deride, chastise and criticize, the world of the Ottoman court and the Ottoman Empire on the heels of the battle of Lepanto, constituted an alien world as well. The composer of the sonnet and its commentator considered the Turk, embodied in the figure of Selim, as the depraved, constant menace to Christendom, evoked as constituting a strange alien world on account of its adherence to a foreign religion, considered the arch enemy of Christianity. The use of ‘exotic’ elements such as “Arabesque” words, Turkish names, and the allusion to alleged Muslim religious practices only adds to this impression of a world far removed from the experience of the readers of the world or their capacity to understand it. As

the victory signalled in the “Hic et hec et hoc etc”. This is a demonstrative pronoun of things present and because the Holy League showed such valour. This is what is indicated by “Hic et hec et hoc”. Before this is the great praise of the Holy League as hic et hec [sic] et hoc demonstrates all that can be demonstrated in all the genders. Hence the Holy League presented all that is possible to demonstrate about religion, valour, force and prudence and seeing in this particular portrait through hic et hec et hoc King Philip, the Pope, and the Venetians, applying the masculine gender to the king and the one who engenders the princes who defend Christendom, the feminine to the Church, the bride of Jesus Christ and the neutral to the Venetians on account of their being a republic, something more befitting of the neuter than the masculine or feminine].

²⁰ “E l'aspetano etc.” prosiguiendo el autor la materia comentar, en estos dos versos primeros del segundo quarteto aplica el número de los turcos muertos captivos a una antigua profección que ellos tienen, conviene a saber, que en la casa de la Meca estarán quatro capitanes, llamados Ali Piali, Caracos y Siroch [sic], esperando una batalla en la qual abía de morir sesenta mil turcos, y entonces los dichos capitanes con sus exércitos yvan al otro mundo, después de lo qual el imperio del turco duraría poco; y esta verasímil aplicación aça el autor para añadir mayor miedo y terror al turco, mostrando el cumplimiento de sus mismas propheçías, porque ansí como suele decir que quando las galeras están cerca está el lugar, ansí quando las prophesías se cumplen con esto es porque plegue a Dios ansí sea. “Lamech etc.” es el templo de Mohama que vulgarmente decimos la Mecca” (Ms. Barberiniano Latino 3602, fol. 16r) “[And they wait, etc.]” the author continues with the same theme, explaining the two verses in the second quatrain, applying the number of dead Turks and captives to an ancient prophesy which they have in which four captains: Ali Piali, Caracos and Siroch [sic], will be in the house of Mecca, waiting for a battle in which 60,000 Turks would die. Then the said captains along with their armies, went to the other world after which the Turkish empire would last for just a short time longer and the author alludes to this likely story to add more fear and terror to the Turk, showing the fulfilment of the prophesies and that when the prophesies are fulfilled it is because God has willed it. “Lamech etc” is the temple of Mohammed which we commonly refer to as Mecca].

such, the work is an interesting glimpse into the aftermath of the battle for the Catholic world and how it responded to an albeit, short-lived triumph. It is also an interesting example of the kind of knowledge of Islam which was generally available to Christian writers and readers in the second half of the Sixteenth Century. Still in the throes of a crusader-like mentality which pitted Christendom against Islam, the Catholic powers could perhaps bask in their last great victory over the infidel foe before other preoccupations were to take hold of Catholic geopolitical considerations.

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