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‘Fatal Turkcs’ and the Limits of Epic:
King James’s *Lepanto* (1571)

Abstract

One of the most important but neglected moments of Scottish engagements with Islam is the ‘heroicall song’ of King James VI of Scotland/ I of England celebrating the Christian defeat of the ‘faythlesse Turkes’ in the 1571 battle of Lepanto. A short-lived if celebrated victory, James’s poem is an oddity historically, politically, and formally, and the spectre of Lepanto behind Shakespeare’s *Othello* has overshadowed it in literary history. First published twenty years after the event, and written perhaps in the context of the Spanish Armada before that, James sets himself a tricky task. But even before the 1603 edition’s defensive preface, the paradoxes and challenges of James’s task – to find a markedly Scottish voice, style, and attitude in which to narrate this Catholic victory over what was commonly presented as the encroaching force of Islam – find striking expression in the poem’s complex and overdetermined form. This essay explores James’s literary and political choices in the poem as they seek articulation through the genre of Christian epic, focussing less on the well-studied European sectarian context but instead on James’s representation of the Muslim Ottomans.

When the battle of Lepanto took place, on 7 October 1571, King James VI of Scotland was five years old. Cyprus, long a profitable colony of Venice, had been attacked by the Ottomans in 1570. Only the city of Famagusta held out, but on 1 August 1571 it yielded. Venice, whose lucrative trade with the Ottomans had been suspended, sought aid from the Pope in the form of a long-mooted alliance against the Ottomans whose attacks on Malta, the eastern Mediterranean, and north Africa had long worried southern Europe. A ‘Holy League’ of Venetian, papal, and Spanish forces was mustered, under the leadership of Charles V’s illegitimate son, Don Juan of Austria; and in the deadliest sea-battle of the period, the League defeated the Ottoman navy.¹

The poetic record of the celebration of Lepanto, particularly in Italian and Spanish traditions, is matched only by the visual record, which includes Vasari's frescoes in the *Sala Regia* in the Vatican, Veronese's painting of the battle in the Council Hall of the Doge's palace in Venice, as well as striking contributions by Tintoretto, Vicentino, Cambiaso, and dozens of others.² But there is an odd man out: a short epic on Lepanto by King James VI of Scotland, the Protestant king of a northern nation distant geographically and politically from Cyprus and Catholic Europe. This essay explores James's literary and political choices in the poem as they seek articulation through the genre of Christian epic, focussing less on the well-studied European sectarian context but instead on James's representation of the Muslim Ottomans, the fearsome enemies of the Christian epic tradition since medieval times.

The battle itself has been hailed as a key moment in European history by Fernand Braudel, the actualisation of a perceived conflict between Christian West and Muslim East that had long preoccupied Christian leaders. Numerous eye-witness accounts and news-reports from the Catholic side survive, and the victory was praised even in Protestant Europe.³ The losses were staggering: figures vary, but modern estimates of the death-toll range from 28,000 to 35,000, primarily on the Ottoman side. In many of the accounts, the turning-point of the battle was the death of Ali Pasha and the Ottomans' sight of their general's head spitted on a pike. But despite the Christian victory, within two years the Venetians handed back Cyprus (together with a considerable tribute) and signed a new trading agreement with the Ottomans. The Holy League was no more and the Ottomans returned to Cyprus, the victory exposed as little more than symbolic and temporary.

The short-lived nature of the Holy League's victory must have been clear to James when, in his late teens or early twenties, he wrote a short epic poem on the subject. The mid-1580s was a period of flourishing poetic activity for him, during which he published his influential treatise of Scots poetics, the *Reulis and Cautelis*, and translated some psalms and poems by Lucan and Du Bartas, publishing them in *The Essayes of a prentise in the diuine art of poesie*.⁴ Politically, however, the 1580s were turbulent and unstable, from the Ruthven raid of 1581 to the execution of James's mother, Mary Queen of Scots, in 1587. The agreement he signed with England in 1586 did not fully satisfy either side, given James's ongoing contacts with European Catholic nations, and his

relations with the Kirk remained uneasy.⁵ He found some refuge among the so-called ‘Castalian band’ of fellow poets.⁶ The *Lepanto* is part of James’s effort to establish himself on the European literary and political scene as both a king and a poet. His literary models, and perhaps also his intended audience, are less English than Scottish and European, which partly explains his curious choice of subject for his epic poem.⁷ James’s intended readership was always a wide one, and the *Lepanto*, too, displays what Ralph Houllbrooke calls ‘the element of “negotiation”’ often found in his texts.⁸ But although the politics of the *Lepanto* has primarily been assessed through its attitudes towards Catholicism, James’s chary use of standard contemporary stereotypes about the Ottomans needs to be balanced against his conspicuous failure to present the Catholic victory at Lepanto in the easy orientalist terms of the established Christian epic tradition.

James had clearly read some of the Latin and vernacular poetry emanating from Italy and Spain which celebrated the Catholic victory, usually in self-consciously ‘heroical’ form; many used the dactylic hexameter of Homeric epic, and made conspicuous and strategic use of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, in turn strengthening the geopolitical cast of the encounter as one between East and West.⁹ Some of those poems, too, were presented as ‘songs’ of victory. Although James’s own Lepanto poem uses fourteeners, the metre thought most fit for translating classical poetry, it classicises less strenuously, never describing the Ottomans as ‘Parthians’ or ‘Thracians’, and using mythological maritime tags (e.g., ‘Neptune sank bodies under the red waves’) more sparingly than they do.¹⁰ He avoids allusions to the *Aeneid* (despite his 1584 declaration that he ‘lofty Virgill shall to life restoir’), presumably to avoid suggesting an imperial destiny for members of the Catholic Holy League.¹¹ But his motifs, metaphors, and techniques chime with Latin and vernacular accounts from Italy and Spain: the focus on the dissemination of news of the victory, for example, the description of the blood-reddened waves, the emphasis on the clamour of battle.

The *Lepanto* first circulated in manuscript at the Scottish court, and one of its earliest admirers was James’s own literary idol, Guillaume Saluste Du Bartas, who translated it into French, commending James’s voice and verses as ‘plus qu’humaines.’¹² Du Bartas had visited Scotland and met James in the summer of 1587, to the great excitement of the young poet-king. That same year, the *Lepanto* appeared in *His Majesties Poeticall Exercises at Vacant Houres*. It was reprinted in 1603, now as *His Maiesties Lepanto, or Heroicall Song*, to capitalise on

public interest in James following his accession to the English throne. A Dutch translation by Abraham van der Myl appeared in 1593, from which a German translation would be produced in 1632. And *Naupactiados*, a Latin translation of the *Lepanto* by Thomas Murray (a Scot), was printed in London in 1604. The *Lepanto*, in other words, was unusual in being translated from English into several other European languages; and it garnered a sizeable readership, particularly in Protestant Europe. Significantly, James makes strategic use of Scots elements to strengthen his monarchic and authorial identity as a Scottish king writing on European issues in a short epic in English: Scots words appear in the text – ‘alanely’, ‘samin’, ‘macke’ – principally in the prominent framing materials at the beginning and end, in which James speaks in his own person (or in the person of the narrator).¹³ Also prominent in the poem’s style and strategies is the tradition of Scottish literary poetics (which James himself had helped to frame), with its receptiveness to generic mixture, to thinking through style, and to older literary forms such as the dream vision, which had fallen from favour south of the border.¹⁴

His early poetic efforts earned him admirers among contemporary poets, including Ben Jonson and Henry Constable, who praised his favouring ‘heavenly’ poetry rather than the amorous poetry of the Pléiade poets.¹⁵ Nor did James’s work go unnoticed by European Catholics. At James’s first procession to parliament in March 1604, the Italian community in London presented a pageant centred around a triumphal arch, the central panel of which featured Apollo, god of poetry, ‘with all his ensigns and properties [...] his right hand with a golden wand in it, pointing to the battle of Lepanto fought by the Turks, of which his Majesty hath written a poem; and to do him honour Apollo himself doth here seem to take upon him to describe. His word, *Fortunate Puer*.’¹⁶

The political contexts of the 1591 edition of the *Lepanto* have received particular attention. It was here that James appended a new ‘Poetique praeface’ to the *Lepanto* in which he addressed criticism of the poem.¹⁷ In it, James professes that interpretations of the poem have been ‘cleane contrarie’ to his ‘Intent’, and defends his status as a royal poet: ‘And for that I knowe, the special thing misliked in it, is, that I should seeme, far contrary to my degree and Religion, like a Mercenary Poët, to penne a worke, *ex professo*, in praise of a forraine Papist bastard.’¹⁸ If the 1580s were turbulent, scholars agree that by 1591 James’s political and literary interests coincide more clearly, and there is a

critical consensus about the Protestant commitment behind James's irritated defence of the poem in the 'Poetique Praeface'.¹⁹ And yet, we are still left with questions about why James thought that writing an epic poem about a Catholic victory over the Ottomans could serve his domestic or international interests, and how and why the celebration of a Catholic victory over Muslims should prefigure a Protestant victory over Catholics.

The poem's genre holds some answers. A short epic (or 'heroicall song'), it prompted the scholar Gabriel Harvey to pronounce that in writing it, James was 'a Homer to himself, a Golden spurre to Nobilitye': he 'hath readde a most valorous Martial Lecture vnto himself in his owne victorious Lepanto, a short but heroicall worke, in meeter, but royal meeter, fitt for a Dauids harpe – Lepanto, first of the glory of Christendome against the Turke, and now the garland of a soueraine crowne'.²⁰ 'Short but heroicall' it certainly is. Just over one thousand lines long, it is laden with epic conventions: invocations of the muses, epic similes, catalogues, topoi of narratorial humility, inexpressibility, and modesty, in a suitably elevated register. Its 'martial' subject evokes famous Christian epics such as Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581), Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1516, 1532), or even the *Chanson de Rolande* (c.1100), with their crusading heroes. In these works, the battle against the Muslim foe supplies the basic literary structure, style, and political dynamics of the epic. The mytho-historical purview of Christian epic, its inflated style and scale, its basic opposition between the heroic community and its enemies are all articulated through the figure of the epic hero and his victory over Muslim forces. If the most straightforward contemporary example is that of Tasso, celebrating the re-conquest of Jerusalem from Muslim dominion by the Christian heroes Rinaldo and Godfrey, elements of Christian epic also migrate. Thus, in Book I of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, the Redcrosse knight is compelled to contend again and again with three 'saracen' brothers, despite the Book's primary interest in proposing a Protestant victory over Catholicism. But for all its affiliations with the Christian epic tradition, James's *Lepanto* produces an extraordinary novelty, at least in terms of the English and European epic tradition: an epic devoid of an epic hero, and in which the two opposing sides share more similarities than differences of world-view and experience.

The awkward fit with Christian epic becomes apparent early on. Declaring its Christian epic aspirations, James begins by calling not on the pagan muses but

on God as his muse, as Du Bartas had done in his biblical epic, *Judith* (1574).²¹ It was a poem James knew well, having commissioned and corrected Thomas Hudson's 1584 translation.²² Like the *Lepanto*, it begins with an invocation of the divine muse and concludes with a female song of thanksgiving. James shies away from more pejorative terms like 'infidels' and 'saracens' favoured by his English contemporaries, preferring to refer to the Ottomans as 'pagans', as Du Bartas and Hudson did.²³ Rather than the Virgilian 'Arma virumque cano', as his preface declares, 'I sing a wondrous worke of God', 'a cruell Martiall warre [...] Betwixt the baptiz'd race, / And circumcised Turband Turkes' (ll. 9–10; sig. H2). So far, so conventional. But as an epic that unfolds within God's providential remit, its outcome is already a given, its animus is shifted out of the human domain by James and now originates in an insubordinate act by Satan, who has (says Christ) 'inflamde' (l. 52; sig. H2v) the Ottomans against the Christians of Constantinople. Before God intervenes to send Gabriel to inflame the Venetians in turn against the Ottomans, Satan is given a strong, scornful retort: 'Fayth? Quoth he, / Their Fayth is too too small / They striue, me thinke, on eyther part, / Who farthest backe can fall' (ll. 60–63; sig. H3). 'On eyther part' – James lets neither Catholics nor Protestants off the hook. Satan's claim is no mere sniping: the idea that the rise of the Ottoman empire owed much to the divisions of the Christian world was long recognised, and would find explicit expression in an important work of Ottoman history dedicated to James, Richard Knolles's *The Generall Historie of the Turkes* (1603).²⁴

The scene now shifts to Venice, where Gabriel imitates Satan's actions by fomenting such anger on the streets that the Senate agree to form a 'holy league' against the Ottomans. (Unusually, this Christian epic presents human agents more acted upon than acting.) Moreover, if their enemies' Otherness is conventionally presented through bodily difference, the moral standing of their spiritual difference is reversed: despite the bandying about of terms such as 'faithles Turkes' (l. 51; sig. H2v), the Muslim Ottomans are deemed more pious and active in their faith than Christians are.²⁵ Thus, in its very opening lines, particularly crucial to epic's political and literary mandate, James lowers the heroic stakes of the battle of Lepanto and critiques the Christian subjects of his poem.

Nor does the appearance of the Christian hero improve matters. We first meet would-be epic hero Don Juan of Austria as the league's navies gather off

Sicily – and it is the only use of his name in the entire *Lepanto*. Even here, James uses metrical patterning to downplay him as much as possible. His name appears in the weakest line of the rhyming unit; for the scansion of the line to work, his name must be rushed into only two iambic feet; and his name is subordinated syntactically to Venice and Sebastiano Venier, with whom he was known to have differed regarding ‘What order should haue beene’: ‘Thus bent vpon their interprise, / The principalls did conueene, / Into Messena to consult, / What order should haue beene / Obseru’d in all their armie great: / There Don Ioan d’ Austria came, / Their Generall great, and Venier als / Came there in Venice name ...’ (ll. 200–07; sig. [H4]v-I1).

At subsequent points where James cannot avoid writing of Don Juan’s words or actions, he finds new, deflating formulae to describe him: usually ‘the Spanish prince’, sometimes ‘the generall’, but in the crucial speech before battle ‘the Spaniol prince’. In calling him by the rare term ‘Spaniol’, James is particularly pejorative.²⁶ Reviving the medieval term ‘Spaniel’, James evokes connotations of servility or fawning, foreignness, femininity, and lustfulness associated with spaniel dogs, associations he immediately strengthens by describing Don Juan’s battle-speech to his navy as comprising ‘sugred words and gesture good’ (l. 498; sig. K1).²⁷ In contrast, the Ottoman general Ali Pasha is presented with ‘bold and manly face’, ‘Whose tongue did vtter courage more / Than had alluring grace’ (ll. 518–19; sig. K1). The Ottoman’s rhetoric is well-grounded in his martial bearing and talent for leadership; if his speech is less performative than his opponent’s, it is hinted that his navy is better led. But if that contrast helps James to undercut Don Juan, he does not let the opposition go so far as to implicitly re-animate and re-authorise the epic hero by magnifying his enemy. This tricky handling is most conspicuous in James’s treatment of the turning-point of the battle: the overcoming and beheading of Ali Pasha. Although the eye-witness accounts concur that an unknown soldier performed this act, it was a flattering but coherent and common fiction to attribute it to Don Juan, given his overall command, and his close involvement in the fighting around Ali Pasha’s ship. Also, Don Juan already had something of a crusader reputation, having put down the Morisco rebellion in Albujuaras in 1568, making him ripe for this role. James, however, transplants a detail from elsewhere in his source and attributes the deed to ‘a Macedonian soldier’ – a nameless modern-day Alexander.²⁸ Don Juan is evoked simply as ‘him that did

the Navy lead' (l. 871, sig. LIV), external and superfluous to the action as the mere rewarder of the deed.

As a short epic, the *Lepanto* is necessarily a foreshortened one, the grand scope that Tasso insisted upon in his 'Allegoria' to *Gerusalemme Liberata* compressed, intensified, and reduced to its defining aspects. As a result, James's epic style bears much of the weight of his epic project – and it is here that the Scottish nature of his poetics really asserts itself. Hence, it is all the more significant that the tensions of that project manifest themselves within the most characteristic elements of epic plot and style – or, in Scottish terms, that James begins to take advantage of the generic cross-fertilisation local to his practice. The logic of epic, of course, demands that the epic hero perform the crucial act of defeating the enemy's leader, usually in one-on-one combat; the historical situation at Lepanto, dominated by hand-to-hand combat on the ships as it was, certainly allowed for that. But James's striking refusal to allow an epic hero into this space, and his portrayal of Ali Pasha's beheading in semi-comic terms ('with a Cutlace sharpe and fine / Did whip me off his head'), make the relegation of Don Juan to the position of belated onlooker doubly damaging: not only is he not an epic hero, but neither is anyone else. A similar semi-comic and deflating effect can be found in the intermittent inclusion of external perspectives on the stages of the battle – again, a common epic technique used to produce a sense of magnitude and importance. But James includes no human or divine but a crazily tilted piscine perspective, and on three separate occasions, each marking out a key stage of the battle ('The Fishes were astonisht all, / To heare such hideous sound [...]').²⁹ The victory of Lepanto, thus presented, is bemusing: an unheroic, perhaps even unworthy victory.

If Don Juan is denied a role as epic hero, and potentially replaced by God as primary agent, the role of foe is also displaced from the Ottomans to Satan, who is said to have fomented the Ottoman belligerence against Christians.³⁰ But Satan appears only once in the poem, and God is not eligible for the role of hero as defined in the epic tradition because of his omnipotence and foresight. A vacancy – or absence – transpires. Although functionally Ali Pasha's role as the Muslim enemy is kept in play more than Don Juan's role as epic hero is, James pulls his punches. We have already noted Ali Pasha's 'bold and manly face' and valiant words, in which Turkish honour and reputation dominate, in contrast to the 'sugred words' of 'the Spanish prince'. James also strengthens the

appeal of Ali Pasha by switching the narration of Ali's speech from third to first person, allowing his readers a sense of proximity to Ali and his approving army denied to Don Juan's speech. But with the loss of the central conflict between heroic individuals, and the diminishing of anti-Islamic tropes, James also softens distinctions between Christians and Muslims more broadly. During the battle itself, James treats both sides relatively even-handedly, transmogrifying an epic convention of heroic antagonists so well-matched that the victory is all the more impressive into a reflection on the suffering bodies on both sides: 'The piteous plaintes, the hideous howles, / The greuous cries and mones, / Of millions wounded sundry waies, / But *dying all at ones*' (ll. 624–27; sig. K2v; emphasis mine). For 140 lines of description (the longest section of the poem), the sea-battle is narrated as a wave of suffering, with no partisan comments or language, to the extent that even the dead souls – Christian and Muslim – are consigned to the same classical underworld: 'Dead drop they downe *on euery side*, / Their sighing Spreits eschews, / And crosses Styx into disdaine, / To heare infernall newes' (ll. 652–55; sig. [K3]; emphasis mine).

James does occasionally deploy some of the contemporary pejorative stereotypes of the 'Turks': 'circumcised Turband Turkes' (l. 10; sig. H2), 'cruell Turkes and Infidells' (l. 120; sig. [H3]v) whom he deems 'a great disdayning breed' (l. 335; sig. I2v).³¹ In his sparing use of pejoratives, however, he differs from the continental Lepanto poems, in which the Turks tend to be deemed 'unblessed', 'barbarous', 'warlike', an 'evil nation', tyrannical and deceitful, and identified by the names of Scythians, Parthians, and Thracians, tribes that had been notoriously hostile to classical Greece and Rome.³² On two occasions James describes them as 'cruell Pagans'. But the most common epithet he uses for them is 'faythless'. Faith, in Christian epic, is the key indicator of difference between the opposing sides. Yet from the very beginning of the *Lepanto*, James has allowed Satan's charge against the Christians – that they are of 'too too small' faith – to stand unanswered, a charge he bolsters by having God admit that 'All christians serue my Sonne though not / Aright in everie thing' (ll. 78–79; sig. H3). Given Satan's unchallenged retort that Christians 'on eyther part' are of small faith, we need not necessarily read God's distinction as one between Catholics and Protestants, but as an acknowledgement of ubiquitous failings. James returns to the idea of God's judgement of the relative levels of faith on both sides before the battle starts proper, and finds enough 'faults' on

the Christian side to rule out a foregone conclusion: 'And so he weighed in Heauen, / The Christian faults with faithlesse Turkes, / The ballance stood not eauen, / But sweid vpon the faithlesse side: / And then with awfull face, / Frownd God of Hosts ...' (ll. 405–10; sig. [I3]v). This Christian victory is not inevitable, in other words, and both sides have enough faithlessness to be measured on the same balance. God administers his own test of humanity, Christian and Muslim, in order to judge who should win. The effect is doubly chastising: in precisely the genre where readers expect to find confirmation of Christian supremacy and anti-Islamic prejudice, they are instead rebuked in their own practice of faith and in expectations of Christian heroism with which they approached the text.

This, then, is a different sort of ecumenical ambiguity from that which critics have derived from James's ambiguities about Catholicism in the poem. Rather, it destabilises Christian epic and its rigid belief-system. Nowhere is this more conspicuous than in the several false horizons of the poem's conclusion. Rather than ending with the death of Ali Pasha (as a Virgilian epic would have done), or with confirmation of the Christian victory (as Tasso had done), the narrative hurries towards nightfall, the communication of news to the Ottoman sultan, the freeing of Christian slaves aboard Turkish ships, and then back to Venice to consider the scene in which the news is received. Like Du Bartas's *Judith*, James concludes not with the culminating heroic act, therefore, but with the dances and songs of thanksgiving by 'Matrons graue, and Mayds modest' (l. 910; sig. L2) in the Venetian marketplace.

But James has not given up on Christian epic sufficiently to give the last word to ordinary Venetian women, and he attempts a more godly conclusion, necessitating a segue by way of dream-vision to a chorus of angels: 'In hearing of this song mee thinks, / My members waxes faynt, / Nor yet from dulnes can I keepe / My minde by no restraint. / But loe, my Yrnie head doth nod, / Vpon my Adamant brest, / My eie-lidds will stand vp no more, / But falles to take them rest' (unnumbered; sig. L3). As an expression of James's Scottish poetic values, the dream vision is not entirely surprising; to the early modern English or European reader of Christian epic, however, it must have read awkwardly. A new angelic song of thanksgiving is sung, but James's fears about the interpretation of his poem intrude, and we return to his chief theme: not the

defeat of the 'faythless Turkes' but Christian faithlessness, now more sharply angled against Catholics: 'For since he shewes such grace to them / That thinke themselues are iust, / What will he more to them that in / His mercies onely trust?' (unnumbered; sig. [L4]). Yet even here, doubt prevails: all four subsequent reiterations of this theme take the form of unanswered questions. James is compelled to intervene once more to manufacture some sense of conviction or closure: a narratorial epilogue restates the Protestant message of the angelic chorus, this time addressing the reader directly, 'Exhorting all you Christians true / Your courage vp to bend' (unnumbered; sig. [L4]v). It is an extraordinarily underwhelming conclusion to an avowedly Christian epic about a great Christian victory over a famously powerful Muslim enemy.

Without an epic hero, and without a clearly-articulated sense of difference between the heroic community and its enemies, the formal project of the poem fails, at least on the surface of things, and James looks to non-epic genres of lyric, dream-vision, and even a final direct appeal to the reader. While these are more recognisable moves within the Scottish literary poetics James espouses, in a long Scottish tradition of using different genres within one text to act as different lenses on a particular issue, to a non-Scottish reader, they appear challenging. One way or another, when the form of epic alone is no longer sufficient for his purposes, James does not go for the easy answers and does not fall back on generic or popular stereotypes about the 'cruell Turkes'. The lack of Christian certainty instead has him present an open vista of human suffering at Lepanto. As an intellectual engagement with the most powerful Islamic nation of the time, it shows James holding back on the noxious stereotypes of his contemporaries, if not in intention, at least in execution. Instead, it is the disunities of Christendom that he ultimately critiques in his 'heroical song', disunities not overcome but only thrown into relief by confrontation with the Muslim navy. If it is not 'like some great bomb [...] in the palaces of power', as Howard Barker imagined Galactia's provocative painting of the battle of Lepanto to be, it is a genuinely bold and brave royal experiment in a new European politics, trialled through a more historically-responsible poetics. It exemplifies the deficiencies of those old forms, those old values, for engaging the contemporary world even as it explores them in more generically pluralist Scottish terms.³³ At least one of James's subjects took note: the only other Lepanto poem in English from

the period, Abraham Holland's *Naumachia* (1622), took care not to identify the navies on either side, instead exploring the suffering of all combatants en masse in an extended sequence forming the main body of the poem.³⁴ Now, tellingly, instead of God or Clío or Calliope, Holland's muse for 'this Sad fight' is a hellish fury, 'Tissiphone, Infernall Muse' (sig. C4v).

Notes

- 1 See Palmira Brummett, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994) on the vigorous renewal of the Ottoman navy after this defeat.
- 2 See, for example, the edition and translations of Latin poetry from Italy and Spain gathered in *The Battle of Lepanto*, ed. Elizabeth R. Wright, Sarah Spence, and Andrew Lemons (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
- 3 The editors of *The Battle of Lepanto* liken the speed of poetic responses to the battle to that of bloggers and journalists today (p. ix). Holinshed tells of bonfires being lit in London and a sermon preached at St Paul's to celebrate the victory. Raphael Holinshed, *The Third Volume of Chronicles* (London: [Henry Denham], 1587), pp. 1226–27.
- 4 Edinburgh: Thomas Vautroullier, 1584.
- 5 His Catholic correspondents included Jesuits and the Duc de Guise, even after the Anglo-Scots alliance of 1586 was signed.
- 6 On the Scottish writers surrounding James, and James's admiration for the French Pléiade poets, see Helena Mennie Shire, *Song, Dance and Poetry of the Court of Scotland Under King James VI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) and Priscilla Bawcutt, 'James VI's Castalian Band: A Modern Myth', *Scottish Historical Review* 80 (2001), pp. 251–59.
- 7 In suggesting that 'the *Lepanto* may have been written with deliberate ambiguity' to please both Protestants and Catholics, Jane Rickard exemplifies critical uncertainty about James's motivations in writing about the battle of Lepanto. Rickard, 'From Scotland to England: The Poetic Strategies of James VI and I', *Renaissance Forum*, 7 (2004): www.hull.ac.uk/renforum/v7/rickard.htm. Peter C. Herman and Daniel Fischlin, however, see the *Lepanto* as James's way of 'asserting monarchic authority within and without Scotland by representing himself through the highest, most "noble" genre'. Herman, "Royall Poetrie": *Monarchic Verse and the Political Imaginary of Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), pp. 157–95 (p. 172). Fischlin, "'Like a Mercenary Poet': The Politics and Poetics of James VI's *Lepanto*", in *Older Scots Literature*, ed. Sally Mapstone (Edinburgh: John Donald, 2005), pp. 540–59. See also Astrid Stilma, *A King Translated: The Writings of King James VI & I and their Interpretation in the Low Countries, 1593–1603* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012); Rickard, *Authorship and Authority: The Writings of James VI and I* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).
- 8 See 'Introduction', in *James VI and I: Ideas, Authority, and Government*, ed. Houlbrooke (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006; repr. London: Routledge, 2016), p. 1.

- 9 See David Quint's influential argument about the *Aeneid*'s generic overcoming of romance, figured as eastern, in *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Homer to Milton* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), and the introduction to *The Battle of Lepanto*.
- 10 From the anonymous '*Laeta sub auspicio felici et numine sancti*', trans. in *The Battle of Lepanto*, p. 109.
- 11 This appears in sonnet 12, the final sonnet of the sequence (sig. C1).
- 12 Du Bartas' translation, *La Lèpante*, appeared alongside James's original in *His Maiesties Poeticall Exercises at Vacant Houres* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrave, 1591), sig. M2v. His translation concludes with an appeal to the French youth to embark on another crusade against the Turks. James made use of a French source about the battle: *Histoire de la Guerre qui c'est passée entre les Vénitiens et la Sainte Ligue, contre les Turcs, pour l'isle de Cypre, ès années 1570, 1571 & 1572* (Paris: Nicolas Chesnau, 1573), the translation by François de Belleforest of the Italian Protestant Pietro Bizzari's account of Venetian–Ottoman hostilities after 1570 (*Cypriam bellum ...* (Basel: Sebastian Henricpetri, 1573)).
- 13 I am grateful to Joanna Kopaczyk for sharing her expertise on the use of Scots in the poem.
- 14 I owe a significant debt of thanks to the anonymous reader of this essay, who provided invaluable insight into more local features of James's style typical of Scottish literary culture.
- 15 Epigram 4 in *The Workes of Ben Jonson* (London: William Stansby, 1616) notes that 'For such a Poet, while thy days were green, / Thou wert, as chief of them are said t'have been' (p. 770/sig. 3T1v). Constable visited the Scottish court in 1583 and 1589, and his sonnet heads the collection of commendatory sonnets to *His Maiesties Poeticall Exercises*.
- 16 *The Whole Royal and Magnificent Entertainment of King James through the City of London 15 March 1604* [i.e. 1603] ..., ed. R. Malcolm Smuts, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), vol. 1; accessed through Oxford Scholarly Editions Online (2012). 'Fortunate puer', meaning 'fortunate boy', is a Virgilian tag from Eclogue 5, addressing his shepherd-poets' bid for worldly fame through their poetry.
- 17 *His Maiesties Poeticall Exercises*, sig. [G4]v. He reminds us, however, of his lack of free time to edit the works, being consumed with affairs of state ('my burden is so great and continually, without any intermission').
- 18 *His Maiesties Poeticall Exercises*, sig. [G4].
- 19 See Rickard, 'From Scotland to England', and especially Herman, "'Best of Poets, Best of Kings": King James VI and I and the Scene of Monarchic Verse', in *Royal Subjects: Essays on the Writings of James VI and I*, ed. Daniel Fischlin and Mark Fortier (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2002), pp. 61–103. The poem's ambiguities of treatment and tone on the subject have often been seen as prefiguring James's adoption of the role of *rex pacificus*. But recent readings have found the *Lepanto* less conciliatory. Stilma, Robert Appelbaum, and David Bergeron emphasise the poem's investment from the start in what they describe as an 'allegory' of Protestant persecution, and a promised eventual supremacy over Catholic Europe. See Stilma, *A King Translated* (especially pp. 83–98); Robert Appelbaum, 'War and Peace in the *Lepanto*', in *Reading Monarchs Writing*, ed. Peter C. Herman (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), pp. 179–214; David Bergeron, "'Are We Turned Turkes?'" English Pageants and the Stuart Court', *Comparative Drama*, 44.3 (2010), pp. 255–75.

- 20 Cited in Sandra Bell, 'Writing the Monarch: King James VI and *Lepanto*', in *Other Voices, Other Views: Expanding the Canon in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Mary V. Silcox, and Graham Roebuck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1999), p. 202.
- 21 Du Bartas also adopted Urania as the Christian muse in *La muse chrétienne* (1574), a 'poetic manifesto' (p. 174) for sacred verse, as Deirdre Serjeantson notes. 'English Bards and Scotch Poetics: Scotland's Literary Influence and Sixteenth-century English Religious Verse', in *Literature and the Scottish Reformation*, ed. Crawford Gribben and David George Mullan (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), pp. 161–90 (especially pp. 168–74). James translated and included a portion of *La muse chrétienne* in *Essayes of a Prentise*.
- 22 *The historie of Iudith* (Edinburgh: Thomas Vautroullier, 1584). See Sergi Mainer, 'Translation, Power and Gender in Thomas Hudson's *Historie of Iudith*', *Scottish Literary Review*, 6.2 (2014): pp. 1–23.
- 23 For example, 'that *Pagan* stout' in the opening (sig. B1). By contrast, the English clergyman Meredith Hanmer applies the term 'Infidel' widely to both Muslims and non-Muslims, as well as using the terms 'Saracens', 'Barbarians', and 'Idolatrers', in his overview of world religions prefacing his sermon *The Baptizing of a Turke* (London: Robert Waldegrave, 1586).
- 24 From the Induction to the *Generall Historie* (London: Adam Islip, 1603), sig. [A5].
- 25 This, too, is clearly stated in Knolles's *Generall Historie*, sig. [A5].
- 26 There is, however, a sixteenth-century survival of a less pejorative use of 'Spaniol' to refer to a Spanish person, attested in *A Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue*: www.dsl.ac.uk/entry/dost/span3ell_n_2.
- I owe this point to the anonymous reader referred to earlier. However, given James's ongoing reluctance to credit 'the Spanish prince' with heroism or indeed any action, I think it likely that he intended to evoke the pejorative meaning.
- 27 See Ian MacInnes, 'Mastiffs and Spaniels: Gender and Nation in the English Dog', *Textual Practice*, 17. 1 (2003): pp. 21–40 (pp. 32–36).
- 28 In the Belleforest translation of Bizzarri's *Histoire de la Guerre ...*, James would have found the act credited firstly to a Spanish soldier (p. 239), but in the victory celebrations, to a Macedonian Greek, whose harquebus-shot allegedly first felled Ali Pasha (p. 266). Van Der Myl (1593) replaces the 'Macedonian soldier' with a 'Greek' soldier, as does Du Bartas ('vn soldat Grec') in *La Lepanthe*. See Stilma, p. 107.
- 29 Ll. 616–17; sig. K2v. At the start of battle, when the sun shifts in the Christian forces' favour, the piscine perspective makes it even more difficult to distinguish heroes from foes: 'The glistening cleare of shining Sunne / Made both the Hosts so glance, / As fishes eies did reele to see / Such hewes on Seas to dance' (ll. 556–59; sig. K1v). Another potential reading, emphasising the work's place in Scottish literary theory and practice, might find the piscine perspective a little less extravagant, its decentring purposes more central to James's epic task. On stylistic mannerism and the baroque, see, for example Roderick J. Lyall, *Alexander Montgomerie: Poetry, Politics, and Cultural Change in Jacobean Scotland* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005).
- 30 See also Stilma, pp. 88–89.
- 31 Significantly, James had also described the Spanish as 'disdaynfull' not long before, if in an ostensibly positive register ('from hotte and barren Spayne [...] With proud disdaynfull brayne', ll. 269, 271; sig. I1v).

- 32 See, for example, the work of Giovanni Antonio Odescalchi, Giovanni Antonio Taglietti, Guglielmo Moizio and Juan Latino, helpfully gathered in *The Battle of Lepanto*.
- 33 Barker, *The Castle; Scenes from an Execution* (London: John Calder; New York: Riverrun Press, 1985); scene 12 (p. 175). *Scenes* concerns a Venetian commission of a celebratory painting of Lepanto from a leading female painter.
- 34 Dedicated to James's controversial Catholic favourite, George Gordon, Earl of Huntly, it was reprinted alongside 'A funerall elegie of King James' in 1626, further cementing the connection to James.

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