

THE SPANISH-DUTCH WAR IN SPANISH 17TH CENTURY PAINTING AND THEATER

Recibido: Julio 2013
Aceptado: Noviembre 2013
<https://doi.org/10.14603/1E2014>

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LA GUERRA HISPANO-HOLANDESA EN LA PINTURA Y TEATRO ESPAÑOL DEL SIGLO XVII

RESUMEN: El propósito de este artículo es analizar cómo dos dramaturgos (Lope de Vega y Calderón de la Barca) y dos pintores (Juan Bautista Maíno y Diego Velázquez) representaron a los militares holandeses en tres acciones bélicas diversas: la primera es la que muestra *El asalto de Mástrique por el príncipe de Parma*, de Lope de Vega; las segundas, las que representan *El Brasil restituido*, de Lope de Vega, y *La recuperación de Bahía*, de Maíno; y, finalmente, la tercera es la que inspira *El sitio de Bredá*, de Calderón de la Barca, y *La rendición de Bredá* o *Las lanzas*, de Velázquez.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Breda, Pintura

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to analyze how two playwrights (Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca) and two painters (Juan Bautista Maíno and Diego Velázquez) portrayed the Dutch military men in three different war actions: the first is *El asalto de Mástrique por el príncipe de Parma*, by Lope de Vega; the second, *El Brasil restituido*, by Lope de Vega and *La recuperación de Bahía*, by Maíno, and finally, the third *El sitio de Bredá*, by Calderón de la Barca, and *La rendición de Breda* or *Las lanzas*, by Velázquez.

KEY WORDS: Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Breda, Painting

Holland was constantly present in the political and artistic life of Spain from the middle of the 16th century to the end of the 17th century. During most of that time the Spaniards mostly associated Holland with war, the terrible and long 80 Years War, which started in 1566 and ended in 1648. The misery and destruction of that conflict created a very negative image of the Dutch people, they were perceived as the enemy, the rebel, not only against the king of Spain, but also against the true God. They were bad sovereign subjects and heretics in the eyes of the Spaniards of that era. These images appeared in all literary genres (novel, political satires, theater, political treatises) and in the vast majority of Spanish authors dealing with Dutch characters. Sometimes, they were used as means to criticize Spanish politics. Such is the case of Francisco de Quevedo in his *Fortune in her Wits or the Hour of all Men*, written around 1635, and published 20 years later. In this Menipean satire Quevedo, as a humanist, attacks the domestic and international policies of the Count-Duke of Olivares in 40 scenes. In two of them, numbers XXVIII and XXXVI, the main characters are Dutch: the Prince of Orange appears in XXVIII. In XXXVI it is the Dutch captain of an expedition to Chile. This scene was probably based in the expedition commanded by Jacques L'Hermite that took

place between 1623 and 1626, in which the captain attempts to convince the Chilean Indians to become allies of Holland in the war against the King of Spain. In these two scenes, Quevedo describes the Dutch people as thieves of the sea and bad sovereign subjects. It is very interesting that in the scene XXVIII it includes the paragraph in which the Prince of Orange compares Holland with Venice, both enemies of the Spanish Empire, and accepts the term «ladrón» (thief), but adding some witty remarks: «Quien corta bolsas, siempre es ladrón; quien hurta provincias y reinos, siempre fue rey; el derecho de los monarcas se abrevia en viva quien vence» (259). The scene ends with the Prince of Orange, working as a tailor, and making a cardboard crown for himself.

But the purpose of this paper is to analyze how two playwrights (Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca) and two painters (Juan Bautista Maíno and Diego Velázquez) portrayed the Dutch military men in three different war actions: the first is *El asalto de Maastrique por el príncipe de Parma*, by Lope de Vega; the second, *El Brasil restituido*, by Lope de Vega and *La recuperación de Bahía*, by Maíno, and finally, the third *El sitio de Bredá*, by Calderón de la Barca, and *La rendición de Breda* or *Las lanzas*, by Velázquez.

The seizure of the city of Maastricht (Mastrique in 17th century Spanish) by the Spanish Army under the command of Alejandro Farnesio took place on the 28 of June of 1579. Lope de Vega wrote the play in 1604, according to his most recent editor Enrico di Pastena¹. This means that he wrote the play 25 years after the actual event. We don't know the reasons why Lope decided to write this play that year, although the opinion of Jorge Checa is very admissible, because he points out the coincidence between the writing of this play and the seizure of the city of Ostende. Lope de Vega used the memoirs of the captain Alonso Vázquez, entitled *Los sucesos de Flandes y Francia del tiempo de Alejandro Farnese* as the main source for the facts described in his play². However some critics think that he followed a lost source, because these memoirs were not published until 1624.

I am not going to discuss in this talk the historical accuracy of Lope de Vega's play, among other things because the playwright altered the actual facts and introduced fictitious characters to add dramatic interest to the action of his *comedia*. But we have to say that he reflects the desperation, misery, and hunger suffered by the Spanish soldiers of the famous «tercios». In the first stanzas of the play we listen to the complains of Alonso to his comrade Añasco:

Sufrir la escarcha del hielo
de enero, al flamenco suelo,
o el calor de julio en Libia,
no quita el valor ni entibia
los rayos del quinto cielo;
no el ver volar por el viento,
entre los rotos pedazos
de las armas, pies o brazos
caer cuerpos ciento a ciento,
como pájaros en lazos;
esto, ni es espanta ni altera.

¹ Pastena, 2001: 27.

² Checa, 2010: 583-584.

Mientras un hombre no muera,
denle a comer y beber:
¿no hay más de andar sin comer
tras una rota bandera? (3).

This is a very realistic portray of the hard conditions that the Spanish soldiers had to endure during the war, but we can see that Alonso does not complain about the elements or the cruelty of the battle, but about the shortage of food and drink that forces him to consider quitting the Army and going back to Toledo.

What about the Dutch soldiers and the inhabitants of the city of Maastricht? We don't know too much about them, because Lope de Vega, as Jorge Checa in his study of the play pointed out, does not give them a voice, furthermore they scarcely appear. Lope de Vega's main goal in this play resides in praising the courage and bravery of the Spanish army and its officers, especially the prince of Parma, Alejandro Farnesio, who directs the military operations from bed as he is recovering from a serious illness³. Therefore the spectator does not need to listen to them; the only thing that the Spanish public sitting in the «corral de comedias» have to remember is the fact that Maastricht belonged to the ancestors of Philip II: «Felipe tiene aquí de sus abuelos / el patrimonio» (*El asalto de Maastricht*, 53), in the words of Farnesio. They also have to remember that the Dutch are rebelling against his legitimate King, and therefore don Lope, the limping Spanish officer, refers to them as: «¡Bellacos, rebeldes, viles» (*El asalto de Maastricht*, 28), and Parma cries out: «¡Rebelarse al rey su tierra!» (*El asalto de Maastricht*, 53).

The only positive image of the Dutch inhabitants and soldiers of Maastricht has to do with their capacity to invent artifacts and create traps to prevent the city from falling in the hands of the Spaniards. In the second act don Fernando asks the Prince to leave Maastricht alone, because:

Señor, Maastricht está fuerte,
¿de qué sirve detenerte
perder gente y tiempo aquí?
Tiran mil bombas de fuego
y cadenas, que una sola
lleva veinte hombres de bola,
que es un temerario fuego? (*El asalto de Maastricht*, 38)

And later, Parma remarks annoyed and amazed:

¡Qué de fuego, qué de gente,
artificios, municiones,
quimeras, armas, traiciones!
No hay cosa, en fin, que no intente (*El asalto de Maastricht*, 52)

As you can observe Parma is not trying to complement the creativity and the inventions of the besieged inhabitants of Maastricht, he is describing them as traitors, diabolical people capable of anything to save their lives; and in another occasion in the

³ For the biography of Alejandro Farnesio, see Leon van der Essen, 1933-1937.

play the Prince says: «aquesta gente de Mastroique / son diablos, son infiernos, no son hombres» (*El asalto de Mastroique*, 43).

The only time we listen to the Dutch in the first act is when they cowardly attempt to shoot the Spanish officer who tries to negotiate their surrender. After that, scared, they accept the conditions imposed by Parma and abandon the fortress in exchange for their lives.

In the second act we have a scene in which the Dutch governor, the Flemish captain Enrique and some of his men from the wall describe the preparations of the Spanish Army to initiate the siege. In the conversation between the Governor and the captain they show confidence in the defense of the city, and at the same time they display their hatred for the Spaniards calling them braggarts.

In the third act the Dutch soldiers and officers are never in the stage. Lope de Vega focuses his attention on the Spaniards and their attempts to conquer the city. He wants to emphasize the bravery of the Spanish soldiers and officers. They are able to face the adversities of the war, like the illness of their General the Prince of Parma, without despair, although sometimes they don't understand why God does not help them. This idea is evident in a comment by Otavio Gonzaga about the situation of Parma: «No sé por qué le desayuda el cielo, / siendo tan grande su cristiano celo» (*El asalto de Mastroique*, 54)

They are fighting in the name of the true God against these Lutherans, so God should be on their side. Alonso, the soldier who wanted to desert, explain very well that the Spanish soldiers defend their King and «la ley de Cristo» (Christ's law). And at the end he remains victorious with the seizure of Mastroique, and the Spaniards are able to sack the city without mercy.

The second play by Lope de Vega that I want to analyze is *El Brasil restituído*, finished according to the autograph manuscript on October 23, 1625⁴. The play narrates the recuperation of the city of Bahia (Brasil), which was taken by a Dutch expedition under the command of Jacob Willekens, Peter Hecyh, and Jan van Dorth, on May 11th, 1624. The city was reconquered by an Spanish-Portuguese expedition under the command of don Fadrique de Toledo y Osorio on April 28, 1625, and the Dutch Army abandoned the city honorably on May 1st. The recuperation of Bahía was one of the most relevant military triumphs of that year, the *annus mirabilis* of the reign of Philip IV and the Count-duke of Olivares. This victory was immortalized by Juan Bautista Maíno in *La recuperación de Bahía*, an extraordinary masterpiece, painted for the Hall of Realms of the Palacio de Buen Retiro in Madrid in 1634.

As in *El asalto de Mastroique* Lope de Vega does not seem too much interested in portraying the Dutch soldiers. In this play the enemy, or I would say the worst enemies, are the Portuguese Jews who welcomed the invaders betraying, not only God, but also the King of Spain. These «traitors» are represented by Bernardo, the father of Guiomar, who asked the assistance of the Dutch because he was afraid of the Spanish Inquisition, portraying the Dutch as the savior:

Porque dicen que enojado
Dios con nosotros está,
habemos escrito a Holanda,

⁴ About the sources of his play see Martínez Torrón, 1987; and Peres, 2003.

que con armada se apresta,
de quien tenemos respuesta
que sobre sus aguas anda,
juzgando será mejor
entregarnos a holandeses,
que sufrir que portugueses
nos traten con tal rigor. (*El Brasil restituido*, 261)

In these verses we observe how the 17th century Spaniards represented the alliance of these two heretic nations against Spain, topic that will reappear constantly in the Spanish literature of that time, for example in the episode of *La isla de los Monopantos* of the already mentioned *Fortune in her Wits* by Quevedo⁵. Lope de Vega provides the proof of this alliance with the proposed marriage between the Dutch Leonardo and the Jewish Guiomar, marriage that provokes the irony of the Portuguese Machado: «¡Lindo casamiento harán / un hereje y una hebrea!» (*El Brasil restituido*, 266).

The big difference between the Lope's plays consists in the treatment that the Dutch soldiers receive at the end of the play: in *El asalto de Matrique* they are humiliated; in *El Brasil restituido* they are treated with respect, and they surrender honorably. I would like to bring to your attention the final scene of the play. Leonardo, the Dutch soldiers, bring the surrender conditions proposed by monsieur Armelingues, the Dutch Colonel, to don Fadrique. Don Fadrique rejects them, but immediately refers to the Spanish King Philip IV as a severe judge, but at the same time as a merciful father. Don Fadrique has a portray of the King in his tent and he talks to the King asking him if he wants to forgive the Dutch, represented here by Leonardo kneel down in front of the portray:

Magno Felipe, esta gente
pide perdón de sus yerros;
¿quiere vuestra majestad
que esta vez los perdonemos?
Parece que dijo sí. (*El Brasil restituido*, 294)

This scene is very unique in this kind of plays because it brings out the King to the battlefield (remember that Philip IV manifested his disposition to accompany the army in different occasions and was always discouraged by the Count-Duke of Olivares). Lope de Vega presents the image of a powerful and merciful monarch, loved, respected and feared by his men and his enemies.

The scene was reproduced by Juan Bautista Maíno in the painting he did for the Hall of Realms in Madrid's Palacio del Buen Retiro, finished in 1635. The theatrical origin of the scene has been maintained in the arrangement of the different characters by the Dominican painter. The painting has been considered an exceptional representation of the terror of war by John Elliott and Jonathan Brown⁶. Rodríguez Ceballos thinks that this painting portrays symbolically the «Unión de Armas» the failed project of the Count-Duke of Olivares⁷. We can observe in the foreground a wounded Spaniard soldier

⁵ For the Spanish-Dutch relations at this period see Israel, 1997.

⁶ Brown and Elliott, 2003: 193.

⁷ Rodríguez G. de Ceballos, 2009: 187-188.

(perhaps Diego Ramírez) helped by a Portuguese woman; in the middleground are don Fadrique de Toledo pointing out the tapestry with Minerva, Philip IV and the Count-Duke of Olivares. Below them are the Dutch soldiers kneeling down, asking the forgiveness of Philip IV. Maíno placed under their feet of Minerva, Philip IV and Olivares: the Heresy, the Treason, and the War; or the Heresy, the Rage, and the Hypocrisy. These figures represented: the heresy, the Dutch; the Treason, the French; the Hipocrisy, the British, according to Brown and Elliott⁸. In the background you can see a landscape and some ships. The painting has been considered a moral and political allegory: catholic mercy as opposed to the impious and rebel heresy, according to Leticia Ruiz. The most important difference between Lope's scene and Maíno's painting is the presence of the Count-Duke of Olivares in the tapestry, suggested by the King's minister. Rodríguez G. de Ceballos has pointed out that the figure of Olivares was lower than the one of the King in the first version of the painting, and that the painter had to modify it to place him at the same height, following the suggestion of the «favourite»⁹. Because Olivares wanted the public to realize that this victory was part of his vision of how the Monarchy had to be perceived and governed. As we said above, the Count-Duke of Olivares considered this triumph as a demonstration of the need of the «Unión de Armas», the project he tried to implement that would involve all the Peninsular kingdoms in the defense of the vast colonies of the Empire.

The last play I want to analyze in this article is *El sitio de Bredá* (*The siege of Bredá*), by Pedro Calderón de la Barca. The city was taken by the Spanish Army under the commando Ambrosio de Spínola in June of 1625 after more than 9 months of hard siege. The news of this victory were celebrated in Madrid as a great triumph of the Spanish cause, and Calderón wrote this play almost immediately, because it was first performed in the Royal Palace the same year. However Simon A Vosters considers *El sitio de Bredá* a masterpiece of the Spanish 17th century theater¹⁰. Ignacio Arellano thinks that this play was a request¹¹, interpreting the word of the epilogue of the play:

Y con esto se da fin
al *Sitio*, donde no puede
mostrarse más quien ha escrito
obligado a tantas leyes. (*El sitio de Bredá*, 1052)

But Simon A Vosters considers that the play was written in 1628-1629 to be represented in front of Spínola who was present in the Court of Madrid during those two years¹². The play belongs to Calderón's early production and some critics have pointed out some mistakes or inconsistencies due to his «immaturity». I am not going to enter in this debate about the date of writing, and analyzed it as a product of the first group of Calderón's theatrical production. Because *El sitio de Bredá* is a very complex drama in which the playwright shows his knowledge of the ideas of one of the most relevant

⁸ Brown and Elliott, 2003: 199, but Rodríguez G. de Ceballos, 2002: 192-193, thinks that the figures represent the Heresy, the Rage, and the Hipocrisy.

⁹ Rodríguez G. de Ceballos, 2009: 190.

¹⁰ Vosters, 1974: 42.

¹¹ Arellano, 2001: 81. Cruickshank, 2009: 85, writes that: «One way of looking at *El sitio de Bredá* is as a kind of war film, made to celebrate a victory in the fourth year of what promised to be a long war».

¹² Vosters, 1981.

humanists of the 16th century, Justus Lipsius, as Alan Paterson has demonstrated¹³. The doctrine of this humanist impregnated some of the most important writers of Spain, starting with Francisco de Quevedo. Paterson has analyzed how Calderón creates the character of Spínola following Lipsius' essential attributes of the military commander: mercy, magnanimity, and prudence¹⁴. This portrayal of the general could be applied to the rest of the Army. The play follows the same pattern of the two Lope de Vega's plays: the three were conceived as a tool of propaganda of the Spanish soldier, and of the Spanish Empire, as Ignacio Arellano pointed out¹⁵. The praises of the soldiers and of the nobility appear already in the beginning of the play. Calderón highlights the qualities of don Fadrique de Bazán, don Gonzalo de Córdoba, the Pimentel family, and the anonymous soldiers: «Siempre los españoles / son en la milicia soles» (*El sitio de Bredá*, 966)

The praise of the Spanish soldier does not hide the hard reality of their life that Lope de Vega remembered in *El asalto de Mástrique*. Spínola reminds to don Gonzalo de Córdoba that

Si no están entretenidos
los soldados en algunos
de los sitios que se ofrecen
para vitorioso asunto
de nuestras armas, podrán
amotinarse. (*El sitio de Bredá*, 963)

The sack of the city and its booty is the remedy, the hope, for these soldiers. Therefore this is one of the reasons to siege Bredá but not the only one, like in *El asalto de Mástrique*. Espínola has another motif for this military action: to perpetuate the name of the King and Queen of Spain: «Isabel y... Filipo» (*El sitio de Bredá*, 969)

But, what happens with the Dutch soldiers? Calderón pays more attention to them than Lope de Vega did. He wants to introduce to the spectator these soldiers as human beings but without the heroism and without the convictions of their Spanish counterparts. In the first act we see how Enrique de Nassau comforts Flora, who has lost her husband in the heroic defense of his religion. After that Enrique wants to avenge his death, and kill Espínola as a way to save Flandes from the threat of Spain. This dialogue presents the human side and the suffering that the war inflicts in the soldiers and their families. Calderón humanizes the enemy, and even introduced a love scene between Laura, a Dutch woman, and don Vicente Pimentel. This unusual moment is justified by the writer thru Alonso's words:

Y aquí
advierta el piadoso oyente
que esto desta suerte pasa
cuando la guerra está quieta

¹³ Paterson, 1989.

¹⁴ Paterson, 1989: 285-288.

¹⁵ Arellano, 2001: 82, writes that the play was conceived «como una exaltación de la nobleza, valor y justicia de las tropas españolas que muestran también su liberalidad y lealtad». On this topic see Kirschner, 2002.

y que no pone el poeta
la impropiedad de su casa. (*El sitio de Bredá*, 1008)

Calderón attempts to dignify the enemy, not only as a human being, but as a great soldier too. He praises some of the Dutch military commanders, something we have not seen in Lope de Vega's plays. The interesting thing is that Calderón puts these praises in Espínola's mouth: Colonel Morgan

Sustenta
toda esa máquina en peso,
que es hombre de inteligencia,
muy altivo y ingenioso
And Justino de Nassau
muestra,
gobernador desta villa,
gran valor y gran prudencia (*El sitio de Bredá*, 1014)

These words prove the equanimity and respect for the enemy of Ambrosio de Espínola, and at the same time contributes to exalt the value of his military victory, because as Espínola says at the end of the play: «El valor del vencido / hace famoso al que vence (1052). And we can add that the way the victorious general treats the defeated counterpart shows his virtues. Espínola makes clear that the Spanish soldiers have to be «liberales», and that they should not humiliate the defeated enemy,

que mayor nobleza ha sido
tener lástima al vencido,
que verle desestimado
con arrogancia (1036-1037).

Calderón pretends to exalt the military virtues of Espínola, his officers (all of them members of the Spanish nobility; Córdoba, Velascos, Guzmanes, Pimentales), and his soldiers. And he wants to treat the enemy with dignity. Nobody understood this aspect better than Velázquez in *The surrender of Breda*¹⁶ We can observe the respect that Espínola showed to Justino de Nassau in two things: first, the fact that he received the keys of the city from the Governor of Bredá dismounted from his horse (we can compare this position with the other paintings in the Hall of Realms); second, the way he poses his arm almost hugging Nassau (in the first version of the scene, Espínola was actually hugging Justino de Nassau). Although some of these details are Velázquez's invention, they reflect the spirit of Calderón's play accurately.

In conclusion, Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca presented two different images of the Dutch: on one hand, Lope de Vega seems most interested in exalting the Spanish Army and almost ignores the other part. On the other hand, Calderón humanizes the enemy, shows its suffering and its greatness to better portray the war and to reflect the virtues of Espínola and his men.

¹⁶ The bibliography on this painting is enormous, I recommend Brown, 1986 y 2008; Brown and Garrido, 1998; and Bennassar, 2012.

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