

A clash of titans: Don Pedro de Valdés vs. Sir Francis Drake in the English literary production on the Spanish Armada of 1588

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ABSTRACT:

In this article, I describe the contrast between the image of Sir Francis Drake after his participation in the defence of England against the Spanish Armada in 1588 and Don Pedro de Valdés, aristocratic commander of the Andalusian fleet, in the literary production and English propaganda in those days. Drake captured the galleass “Nuestra Señora del Rosario”, commanded by Valdes after having been damaged and left unusable, and Don Pedro suffered captivity in England for several years until a high ransom was paid by his family. In the English literature written after 1588, the capture of the Spanish galleon is described as an epic action carried out by Drake, already a hero in the process of being deified at the time as the perfect English admiral and architect of the naval victory of 1588. However, Valdes is presented as a cowardly, vain and inept counterpoint to Drake in order to ridicule the representative of the Spanish archenemy. Following the popularity granted in England to the seizure of the galleass, a number of subsequent Spanish literary characters in English literature on the Armada and on

other Spanish themes appear as stereotyped recreations of antagonists of few virtues and rather often called Valdes/Valdez.

KEYWORDS: *Early Modern English literature; The Spanish Armada; Sir Francis Drake; Don Pedro de Valdés; "Nuestra Señora del Rosario"*

Choque de titanes: Don Pedro de Valdés vs. Sir Francis Drake en la producción literaria inglesa sobre la Armada española de 1588

RESUMEN:

En este artículo presento un contraste entre las imágenes de Sir Francis Drake tras su enfrentamiento a la Gran Armada en 1588 y Don Pedro de Valdés, aristocrático comandante de la escuadra de Andalucía, en la producción literaria y propagandística inglesa de aquellos días. Drake capturó el galeón "Nuestra Señora del Rosario", comandado por Valdés, aprovechando que este había quedado accidentado e inservible y Don Pedro se vio obligado a sufrir cautiverio en Inglaterra durante varios años hasta que su elevado rescate fue abonado por su familia. En la literatura inglesa del periodo inmediatamente posterior a 1588 se describe la captura del galeón como un épico acto de un Drake considerado modelo de héroe inglés en pleno proceso de deificación como perfecto almirante y artífice de la victoria naval. Por el contrario, Valdés es presentado como cobarde, vanidoso e inepto contrapunto de Drake, como un ridículo representante del archienemigo español. A partir de la popularidad otorgada en Inglaterra al suceso, el personaje literario del español en varias obras relacionadas con la Gran Armada u otros asuntos españoles se manifestará sobre todo en forma de estereotipada recreación de un antagonista de escasas cualidades frecuentemente llamado Valdes/Valdez.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Literatura inglesa pre-moderna; La Gran Armada; Sir Francis Drake; Don Pedro de Valdés; "Nuestra Señora del Rosario"*

July 1588. The English Channel. Lord Howard of Effingham (1536-1624), the English Navy's commander, ordered Sir Francis Drake (c.1540-96), his second-in-command, to light a stern lantern to guide the fleet during the night. Drake initially followed the order to the letter, until at some point he extinguished the light and sailed off in pursuit of a mysterious ship on the horizon. He bumped into a Spanish galleass richly laden with bounty and captured it. When reproached by the other commanders for

having disobeyed Howard's order and for having endangered the English fleet in order to selfishly catch a prize, Drake defended himself from the accusations by claiming that he had thought the ship was a Dutch merchantman and wished to warn its crew about the danger of sailing on those waters. He also vainly added in his defence that the Spanish vessel surrendered as soon as its crew learnt that the English captain was no less than the famous Drake. The Spanish ship was "Nuestra Señora del Rosario" (1,150 tons), the flagship of the Andalucía squadron of the Armada, captained by the admiral Don Pedro de Valdes, one of the Spanish leaders of the Armada, at the time threateningly heading for England.

Don Pedro de Valdés y Menéndez de Lavandera (Gijón, 1544-1615) was the best known of the Spanish Armada prisoners of the English in 1588. The galleon that he commanded, "Nuestra Señora del Rosario", had been reluctantly left behind as a write-off by the rest of the Armada after accidentally bumping into another Spanish vessel during the so called "Jornada de Inglaterra" ("Enterprise of England") and was soon afterwards captured by the "Revenge", captained by Sir Francis Drake. The English vice-admiral of the English fleet had had the good fortune of finding Valdes's broken galleass and after some parley, the Spaniard surrendered, seeing that resistance was vain (Froude 1892; Ungerer 1975; Martin 1988; Faya Díaz and Martínez-Radio 2008; Galán Braña s.d.).¹

This invigorating episode of English history has been visually recreated in various artistic forms with clear propagandistic purposes. The earliest is "The Galleon Of Don Pedro [de Valdes] Taken Prisoner By Sir Francis Drake, And Sent To Dartmouth",

¹Froude assures that Valdes put a heroic resistance to Drake (1892: 49-51). Galán Braña (n.d.), of the Real Academia de la Historia, writes in the "Pedro de Valdés" entry that "después de una fuerte resistencia española, [sir Drake (sic)] consigu[ió] la rendición de Pedro de Valdés, con condiciones más o menos favorables para los españoles" (BD-e).

the image on the Three Of Diamonds, from a deck of English playing cards depicting the defeat of the Spanish Armada, 1588. However, the most effective image of the episode is the oil on canvas "Sir Francis Drake 1540-96 on board the Revenge", by John Seymour Lucas (1849-1923), painted in 1888-89. In the picture, the English vice-admiral, all dressed in white, shows his courtesy at the reception of Valdes and the other Spanish prisoners on his ship, which contrasts with the haughtiness and sombre expression in the demeanour of the Spaniards, dressed in black.

The advantageous conditions of Valdes's surrender negotiated with Drake (which must have included not throwing in the sea the fifty thousand ducats they were carrying, the cannon of the ship or the jewels, as would have been the typical policy to carry out when surrendering to the enemy) allowed the Spanish prisoners of war to enjoy a bearable captivity in England, deemed exquisite for the admiral and captains, who were subsequently held in noblemen's mansions until their ransoms could be paid. To his peers Drake declared having obtained a bounty of only twenty thousand gold ducats. The other admirals in the English navy, knowledgeable of Drake's pirate ways, suspected his ill-doing with the monetary bounty caught in the Spanish galleon (Chinchilla 2023: 128-29).

The adventures of Captain Drake in his global voyage (1577-80) as narrated by English chroniclers and ideologists, and later his adventures as Sir Francis Drake, especially during the Spanish campaign of 1588 and in the Spanish Main up to 1596, had a considerable impact on the English literature of the 16th and 17th centuries. Indeed, a first step in the process of aggrandisement of Drake as the prototype of the English hero *par excellence* dates back to his still pre-knighted days.² His travels, raids, prizes and

² See Henry Robarts's *A Most Friendly Farewell given by a Welwiller to the Right Worshipful Sir Francis Drake Knight, General of her Majesties Navy, which he Appointed for his His Honorable Voyage, and the rest of the Fleete bound to the Southward, and to all the Gentlemen his Followers, and Captaines in this Exploite, who Set Sale from Wolwich the*

narrow escapes were narrated and amplified by his contemporaries with gusto, and prolonged even long after his death in 1596. On the other hand, we encounter the first literary depiction of Don Pedro de Valdes as a useful pawn of English propaganda in the construction of a pro-English political and historical narration on the Armada venture of 1588. One of the earliest collaborators in the dissemination of the English victory and of Valdes's capture was Sir Francis Walsingham (c.1532-90), a master spy at the service of Queen Elizabeth and presumable author of *A Packe of Spanish Lyes, Sent Abroad in the World* (1588). His broadside collects a number of lies "invented" by the Spanish propagandists on their proclaimed victory against the English navy, followed by their corrections with the purpose of exposing any information given by Spanish sources; after all, the author claims, the Spaniards were known to be outright liars by nature. One of the "lies" spread by the Spanish was that Drake had been captured;

xv. *Day of July, 1585* (1585) and *The Trumpet of Fame: or Sir Fraunces Drakes and Sir John Hawkins F[are]well with an Encouragement to all Saile[rs] and Souldiers that are Minded to go in this Worthie Enterprise* (1595); Nicholas Breton's *A Discourse in Commendation of the Valiant as Virtuous Minded Gentleman, Maister Frauncis Drake, with a Reioysing of his Happy Adventures* (1581); Robert Leng's *Sir Francis Drake's Memorable Service Done against the Spaniards in 1587* (1588); Richard Hakluyt's "Brief relation of notable service performed by Sir Francis Drake in 1587" (in *The Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation*, 1589, II: 607); Thomas Greepe's *The true and perfecte newes of the woorthy and valiaunt exploiters, performed and doone by that valiant knight Syr Frauncis Drake not onely at Sancto Domingo, and Carthagenas, but also nowe at Cales, and vpon the coast of Spayne, 1587* (1587); the anonymous *Newes Ovt of the Coast of Spaine* (1587); Rev. Charles Fitz-Geffry's *Sir Francis Drake, His Honorable lifes Commendation, and his Tragickall Deathes lamentation* (1596); Philip Nichols's *Sir Francis Drake Reuiued: Calling vpon this Duller Effeminate Age, to follow his Noble steps for Gold and Silver* (1626); Robert Hayman's *Qvodlibets, lately come over from New Britaniola, old Newfovdnd-land* (1628); Francis Fletcher's *The World Encompassed* (1628, 1636 and 1652); Thomas Fuller's *The Holy State* (1642) and *The History of the Worthies of England* (1662), and so forth.

the correction was that not only was he not in captivity, but that he himself had even captured Don Pedro de Valdes and another four hundred Spaniards (Crummé 2019: 31).

Since his capture, Don Pedro de Valdes's persona was often employed as a prototype of the Spanish antagonist in several English literary recreations of the Armada. A number of fictional or pseudo-historical English works on the Armada included evil Spaniards with the name of Valdes or a variation of it (Valdez). Apart from the historical characters of King Philip II and (the Duke of) Medina Sidonia, and to a lesser extent also Alexander Farnese (the Duke of Parma) and Bernardino de Mendoza (ex-ambassador and *persona non grata* in the Elizabethan court), who have seldom failed to appear in almost any piece of English literary production on the Armada, the most recurrently employed Spanish character in the 1588-and-after English literary production is (Don Pedro de) Valdes/Valdez. Indeed, we encounter Valdez as the protagonist of Thomas Deloney's ballad "A joyful new Ballad, declaring the happie obtaining of the great Galleazzo, wherein Don Pietro de Valdez was the chiefe, through the mightie power and providence of God, being a speciall token of his gracious and fatherly goodness toward us, to the great encouragement of all those that willingly fight in the defence of his gospel, and our good Queene of England" (to the tune of "Mounseurs Almaine") (1588),³ being this "galleazzo" Valdez's "Nuestra Señora del Rosario". The ballad narrates the capture of "Don Pietro de Valdez"'s and don Hugo de Moncada's galleasses "San Lorenzo", the latter seized by the English after it ran aground off Calais. In Richard Hakluyt's (1553-1616) propagandistic *Principall Nauigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the Eng-*

³A lost play (presumably with some connection to a Spanish ship), referred to as "Galiaso", of unknown authorship, probably derived from or inspired by Deloney's ballad, is mentioned in Philip Henslowe's diary, as acquired by the Admiral's Men for its staging at the Rose in June 1594. Nothing more is known of this play (if it did exist in reality) (<https://lostplays.folger.edu/Galiaso>, accessed 16/12/2023).

lish Nation [etc.] (1589), the prolific English clergyman offers his Elizabethan and early Jacobean readership a detailed account of the Spanish galleass' capture. We also find a Pedro de Valdes in Robert Greene's *The Spanish Masquerado* (1589), in Thomas Heywood's *The Second Part of: If you know not me, you know nobody* (1606), in Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* (1607), probably in William Shakespeare's *Pericles* (1606-08), where a "great pirate Valdes" is mentioned (IV, 1.98), and also a (German) Valdes in Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragicall Historie of Dr Faustus* (written after 1589) whose role in the play was to encourage Faustus to learn the secrets of black magic.

Robert Greene's Spaniards in *The Spanish Masquerado* are represented by the king of Spain, by the Spanish clergy and by such relevant aristocrats as the Duke of Medina Sidonia and Don Pedro de Valdez, as well as by the viceroys of the Spanish New World, who rule the honey of the Indies and the American treasure that the English aspire to get hold of through freebooting. Medina Sidonia and Valdez both symbolise the defeated Spanish Armada. The former, Captain General of the fleet, is described as ridiculously riding "with one foote out of the stirrup, his cappe pulde over eies, and his pointes untrust" (V, 271), thus foreseeing his failure as a leader of the most powerful Armada in the world. And both Medina Sidonia and Valdez are labelled as cowards. As for Valdez, he had submissively given himself up to Drake after only "a few bullets had but bruised his Ship" (V, 276) and, having been captured with little (if any) resistance, was being interrogated about his part in the Armada and about the characteristics and the number of forces of the Spanish fleet. Greene is especially abusive towards Valdez, whom he calls a "Spanish Caesar" and mocks him further for surrendering in the first skirmish with the English; he, precisely he, who had (allegedly) sworn to conquer England or die in the attempt: "He had like a Lion came storming from Spain, humbly like a lambe crouched to our Admirall [Drake] in the English seas..." (V, 278), he writes. When learning about the pleasant leisure and luxurious lifestyle

that Valdez was being given by his captor Drake (which included hunting and parties), Greene could not avoid exclaiming: "Is this the minde of a Nobleman of dubbed Chyvalry? Doe the Spaniards prize life so high, that they make no estimation of honour?" (V, 276). After offering evidence of Valdez's poor behaviour in the face of danger, Greene settles: "Now note the Spanish braving promises, what cowardly conclusions they infer" (V, 276-78).

The play where the Spanish Armada has a greater presence is Thomas Heywood's *The Second Part of: If you know not me, you know nobody* (1606). The last three scenes of the play are in fact dedicated exclusively to the Spanish Armada. Philip II is angry with Queen Elizabeth because she has rejected his marriage proposal and because she has been sending warships to destroy Spanish coastal towns. By sending a fleet to invade England, the Spanish king wishes to stamp out Protestantism. In the play, the leaders of the Armada, Duke of Medina Sidonia, Don Pedro de Valdez and John Martinus Ricaldus (i.e. Juan Martínez de Recalde) are seen and heard conversing on their ships while they await the king's orders to initiate the attack on the English coast. Arrogantly they speak about the powerful strength of their Armada and even wonder why their king should even bother to invade such a small and insignificant country governed by a woman. The three Spanish generals are sure of their victory. In the meantime, Queen Elizabeth delivers her encouraging speech to her troops at Tilbury. Heywood's play finishes with a celebration for the defeat of the Armada (Eaton 2010: 324-26; Bhaduri 2018: 153-54). For the play's 1633 edition, an extra scene about the Armada, a chorus and eighty more lines have been added where the image of the cruelty of the Spaniards is further emphasised. In the new scene, which includes a conversation between the Duke of Medina Sidonia and Don Pedro de Valdez, the latter is presented as a lascivious and lecherous Spaniard. He lusts after an unarmed Elizabeth and expects the queen's ladies-in-waiting to be raped for their ransoms. In the 1633 version, the queen is also described in military terms to boost her role of leadership in the English

victory and her Tilbury speech is by now fully elaborated.

The Whore of Babylon (1607), by the English dramatist and pamphleteer Thomas Dekker (c.1572-1632), is a post-Gunpowder-Plot play, very much influenced by Spencer's *The Fairie Queene*, by earlier morality plays, by John Foxe's history of Protestantism and martyrology (i.e. *The Actes and Monuments/Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 1563) and by the latter's apocalyptic comedy in Latin titled *Christvs Triumphans* (c.1556). *The Whore of Babylon's* main theme is the abundant conspiracies and attempted assassinations on Elizabeth I (Titania in the play) carried out by representatives of Roman Catholicism (i.e. the Empress of Babylon or the Whore of Babylon) such as bishops, friars, cardinals, Jesuits and papal nuncios, and, above all, by those involved in the famous plot of Dr Roderigo Lopez (represented in the play by the character of Ropus). The famous speech at Tilbury (Beria in the play) is delivered by the character of Truth (representing the Protestant faith), dressed in armour, while a triumphant Titania/The Fairie Queen presides over the Spanish Armada's defeat, which has acquired the status of historic symbol of Popish treachery. The English victory over Catholicism (a faith best represented by Spain) is the perfect sign to prove God's protection over Protestantism, the true Church. Dekker manipulates the timeline of the play as he places the defeat of the Spanish Armada (*the Babylonian Armada in the play*) at the climax of the Gunpowder Plot (1605). An ample number of "Ghost" characters such as Drake, Essex, Raleigh, Little Captain (i.e. Captain Fleming), on the English side, and Flores de Valdes, Gomes de Medina, Medina [Sidonia], [Bernardino de] Mendoza, [Miguel de] Oquendo, [Martínez de] Ricalde (sic, for Recalde), Ugo de Moncada and Pedro de Valdes, commanders of the Babylonian Armada, are part of the cast of this allegorical and overtly propagandistic play.

The legendary figure and charming personality of Drake was another major source of inspiration in the early English poems about the Armada. The number of relevant English participants in the naval clash against the Spanish fleet is gradually reduced

in English literature, chronicles and historiography as Drake's persona grows larger and larger. Soon the list of English actors in the resounding English victory is shortened to only Drake and Elizabeth. In the reign of James I (during the first quarter of the 17th century), ballads about Drake and the Spanish Armada's defeat were still sung by the English folk. One of the most popular was played/sung to the tune of "Jog on or Eighty-eight".⁴ This is the case of the anonymous "Sir Francis Drake (Eighty Eight)", a poem/ballad that must have enjoyed a great degree of following at the time, as it has reached us in different versions and variations:⁵

There was a little man of Spain
That shot well in a gun, a,
Don Pedro hight, as good a knight
As the Knight of the Sun, a.⁶

⁴ Probably sung with the tune used in Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* by the ballad pedlar and rogue Autolycus (happy to have been able to pick Clowne's pocket), which goes as "Jog on, jog on, the footpath way, / And merrily hent the stile-a; / A merry heart goes all the day, / Your sad tires in a mile-a" (IV, iii, l. 123-26). According to Chappell (cited in Furness 1898, 11: 387), the musical notation of this tune, composed by Richard Farnaby, appeared in *Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book* (in MS, dating around 1603-12) as "Haskins", "Sir Francis Drake" or "Eighty-eight" and in John Playford's *The Dancing Master* (1651) with the name of "Jog on".

⁵ The latest variation of the ballad was released by The City Waites in the CD record *Penny Merriments: Street Songs of 17th Century England* (2005; recorded in London in September 2004) with the title "An Old Song on the Spanish Armada, or Sir Francis Drake". The lyrics of The City Waites's version have been consulted at https://www.naxos.com/sharedfiles/PDF/8.557672_sungtext.pdf#; accessed 9/12/2019.

⁶ This stanza appears in the ballad version of Stone's *Sea Songs and Ballads* (1906: 81-82) with the following variations:

There was a little Man that dwelt in Spain,
That shot well in a Gun a;
Don Pedro hight, as Black a Wight,

King Philip made him admiral
 And chang'd him to stay, a
 But to destroy both man and boy
 And then to run away, a.⁷

The character of Don Pedro de Valdes is described in this well-known ballad as a close and trusted collaborator of King Philip, allotted by his monarch with the mission of “destroy[ing] both [English] man and boy”. Due to his being Spanish and “a little man”, he makes a poor opponent to the giant figure of Drake both in English history and in English letters.

In the broadside *England's Remembrancer a True and Full Narrative of Those Two Never to Be Forgotten Deliverances* (1677), the theologian and philosopher Samuel Clarke (1599-1682) takes most of the information about the capture of Valdes from Hakluyt's chapter of the Spanish Armada episode titled “The miraculous victory atchieved by the English Fleete, under the discreet and happy conduct of the right honourable, right prudent, and valiant lord,

As the Knight of the Sun a.

The following variation of the same stanza is sung by The City Waites:

A little man that dwelt in Spain,
 That shot well in a gun-a,
 “Don Pedro height”, as black a wight
 As the Knight of the Sun-a.

⁷Variation of the stanza as it appears in *Sea Songs and Ballads* (1906: 81-82):

King Philip made him Admiral,
 And bad him not to stay a;
 But to destroy both Man and Boy,
 And so to come away a.

Variation of the same stanza as it is sung by The City Waites:

King Phillip made him an Admiral,
 And bade him not to stay-a,
 But to destroy both man and boy,
 And so to come away-a.

the L. Charles Howard, L. high Admirall of England, &c. Upon the Spanish huge Armada sent in the yeere 1588. for the invasion of England [etc.]” (in *The Principall Navigations, Voiages, and Discoveries of the English Nation* [etc.], 1589: 132). When reproducing Hakluyt’s account of the capture, Clarke insists on highlighting Drake’s virtues of courtesy, generosity and military efficiency against Valdes’s cowardice, falseness and vanity:

Sir Francis Drake espied the aforementioned lagging Gallion, whereupon he sent forth a Pinnacle to command them to yield, otherwise his bullets without any delay should force them to it: *Valdes*, to seem valorous, answered, that they were four hundred and fifty strong; that himself was *Don Pedro*, and stood on his honour, and thereupon propounded certain conditions: But the Knight returned this reply, that he had no leisure to parley, if he would immediately yield, so; otherwise he should soon prove that *Drake* was no *Dastard*. *Pedro* hearing that it was the fiery *Drake* (whose name was very terrible to the Spaniards) that had him in chase, presently yielded, and with Forty of his Companions, came on board Sir *Francis* his Ship, where first giving him the *Conge*, he protested that he and all his were resolved to have dyed fighting, had they not fallen into his hands, whose valour and felicity was so great, and *Mars* and *Neptune* seemed to wait on him in all his attempts, and whose noble and generous mind towards the vanquished, had often been experienced even of his gresteast Foes. Sir *Francis* to requite his Spanish Complements with *English* Courtesie, placed him at his own Table, and lodged him in his own Cabin: the residue of that Company he sent to *Plimouth*, where they remained Prisoners for the space of eighteen months, till by payment of their ransoms they obtained their liberty: But *Drakes* Souldiers had well paid themselves by the plunder of the Ship, wherein they found 55000 Ducats of Gold, which they merrily shared amongst them. (1677: 33-34)

When Don Pedro [de] Valdes was interrogated by the Privy Council, Clarke *dixit*, on being asked about the intentions of the

Armada towards England, he answered that it was to subdue the English nation, to root it out, to send the good English Catholics directly to Heaven and the rest of the English heretics to Hell (60). On further questioning, the Spaniard bluntly answered that with rods of cord and wire stored in their ships they meant to whip heretics to death for having dishonoured the Catholic king and people; they intended to do the same to their English children (if they were over seven), but to allow them to live if they were younger. However, they would first brand their foreheads with the letter L for "Lutheran" and keep them as slaves forever (60-61). Clarke was efficiently prolonging the Spanish evil intentions in their attempted invasion of England as declared by Valdes throughout the interrogations. In his pamphlet, Clarke could not afford omitting the transportation of "Whips and Butcherly Knives to murder and torment the poor *English*" (10), information clearly derived from Thomas Deloney's "A new Ballet [=ballad] of the straunge and most cruell Whippes which the Spanyards had prepared to whippe and torment English men and women which were found and taken at the ouerthrow of certaine of the Spanish shippes in Iuly last past 1588" (1588) (in Alrich and Kirtland 1903).

The English Monarchy's political and cultural intelligentsia of 1588 enthusiastically turned Drake's momentous seizure of an illustrious Spanish nobleman, Don Pedro de Valdes, and two of his captains (Don Vasco Mendoza y de Silva and Don Alonso de Zayas), into a popular celebration: the banners of the galleon were "hanged to the joy of all English hearts about the battlements and cross of St Paul's and on London Bridge" (Ungerer 1975: 127). Valdes was duly kept as a prisoner in Drake's household for approximately four and a half years, from the end of July 1588 to February 1592, until his ransom was finally paid by his family. The Spaniard was exchanged for an English prisoner and freed after the extra payment of thirty thousand ducats. The three Spanish commanders were treated gently by Drake's relatives. Valdes managed to make some English friends, mainly

Catholic recusants, who secretly did him the favour of informing his relatives in Cádiz about his wellbeing throughout his English captivity. In the meantime, while in England, together with Captain Vasco de Sylva (sic), Valdes helped in the creation of the first bilingual Spanish-English dictionary published in England, i.e. Richard Percyvall's *Bibliotheca Hispanica* (1591), as stated by the author in the "To the Reader" page:

I ranne it ouer twice with Don Pedro de Valdes, and Don Vasco de Sylua, to whome I had accesse, by the fauour of my worshipfull friend Maister Richard Drake, (a Gentleman as vertuously minded as any, to further any good attempt) and hauing by their helpe made it readie for the presse with the English interpretation onely. (1591, [4])

Despite (allegedly) attempting to escape, the English were as kind and generous as to still allow Valdes to participate in bowls and hunts for his leisure. After his return to Spain, Philip II commanded Valdes to write a report about the coastal defences of Flanders, but never gave him another maritime command. Valdes would only be required for service by the next Spanish king, Philip III, who gave him a post of high responsibility in the Spanish administration overseas in 1600: Valdes was to be the captain-general and governor of Havana (1602-08) until his retirement (Galán Braña n. d.; Sarmiento Ramírez and Huerta Quintana 2016).

The English literati's employment of Don Pedro de Valdes as the epitome of a ridiculous Spanish admiral who pretends to be faithful to his strict code of honour but then surrenders submissively to the enemy in order to save his life has pervaded even up to the late 19th and early 20th century in instances such as Charles Kingsley's novel *Westward Ho!* (1885); Douglas B. W. Sladen's poem "The Armada off Devon" (1888); Mrs Postle's *The Plymouth Hoe* (1888); Henry Hamilton and Augustus Harris's play *The Spanish Armada: A Romance of 1588* (as Guzman de Valdes) (1888) and Rudyard Kipling's poem "The Song of Diego Val-

dez" (1903), among others.

Despite his radical religious, political and literary beginnings, the Victorian novelist, naturalist, professor, Church of England pastor, private chaplain to no less than Queen Victoria and tutor to the Prince of Wales, Charles Kingsley (1819-75), ended up turning into an extreme conservative and staunch supporter of anti-Catholicism and a defender of British imperialism in his middle age. Kingsley published his best-selling historical novel *Westward Ho! Or the Voyages and Adventures of Sir Amyas Leigh, Knight of Burrough, in the County of Devon, in the Reign of Her Most Glorious Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, Rendered into Modern English by Charles Kingsley* (1855),⁸ or *Westward Ho!* for short, in mock-Elizabethan style, but the ideological message depicted in it was no mock self-perception of England's grandeur against the Spanish Armada. The novel consists of an imaginary account of the adventures of a famous English corsair of the Elizabethan period called Sir Amyas Preston (?-c.1617) (Laughton 1888-1900: 305), fictionalized in the novel as Sir Amyas Leigh. After his successful American adventures, Amyas finally returns to England to contribute to the fight against the Spanish Armada.

In his novel, Kingsley offers a detailed explanation of the evolution of the naval battle, where the Spaniards are often verbally abused and where the fictional characters of the novel mix comfortably with the historical ones. The capture of Don Pedro de Valdes "and a host of blue-blooded Dons" (1855, XVIII: 809) is explained by the character of Drake himself in a (fictional) letter that he sends to his friend Amyas in order to update him of the news of his latest adventures. The literary Drake describes the Spaniard as a coward who even kissed his hand on meeting him on board, demonstrating his lack of any sense of honour and at the same time proving to be ridiculously submissive to the victor.

⁸ Throughout the remaining decades of the 19th century Kingsley's novel was republished in three volumes in 1861, 1879, 1865, 1869, 1873, 1876, 1879, and in two volumes in 1881, 1894, 1896 and 1898 (Bateson 1969: 488).

In *The Spanish Armada. A Ballad of 1588* (1888), a brief poetry book published during the celebrations of the three hundredth anniversary of the battle and dedicated to the mayor of Plymouth and to “the Patriotic West Countrymen, who are commemorating the Tercentenary of Britain’s Salamis” (1888: 3), its author, the future English professor of History (in Australia) Douglas B(rooke) W(heelton) Sladen (1856-1947) included two Armada poems, one of which, “The Armada off Devon”, recreated Drake’s seizure of “the stately Capitana” of the Armada as a result of the Spanish vessels clashing together (a clear reference to their inefficiency) (l. 58-65). However, no mention is made of Don Pedro de Valdes.

The twenty-year-old Somerset poet Mrs Eliza Postle (née Pitman, 1868-1946), a resident in Australia after her marriage in 1888, published the poem *The Plymouth Hoe. An Armada Tercentenary Ballad* (1888) in a brief and unpagged book with four illustrations of commanders of the English fleet in her personally preferred order of preeminence: Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir John Hawkins and Sir Martin Frobisher, Drake taking the leading place on her list as the first in importance due to his alleged heroic implication and participation in the English naval victory. Mrs Postle’s poem begins with the narration of the famous episode of Drake’s game at bowls upon the Plymouth Hoe with the rest of the merry English sea captains in the presence of the grave Hawkins, who, feeling happy that day, is proposing a toast for their victory. The poem goes on with Drake’s capture of a flagship of the Spanish fleet, commanded by Don Pedro de Valdes, to whom the English vice-admiral behaved as a real gentleman (l. 96-98).

The occasional English fiction writer of the 19th century also converted real or imaginary Armada episodes into “gothic” narrations where the usual Catholic buildings in ruins of the genre were replaced by decaying Spanish vessel hulls. Lost and stranded Spanish Catholics on lonely coastal English areas now substituted the frequently mysterious deaths so characteristic of gothic fiction. In 1845, Rev. William Thornber (c.1804-85), a Blackpool

historian and a compiler of English folklore about witches, fairies, ghosts and ghouls and of heathen signs of evil “popery”, published the slim *Penny Stone; or, a Tradition of the Spanish Armada* (1845), where he relates that, while Drake’s relatives were in charge of the comfortable imprisonment in London of Don Pedro de Valdes and of “those of name and quality” in London, “the rest of baser sort”, nearly four hundred Spaniards from the “Nuestra Señora del Rosario” (hardly “blue-blooded Dons”), were kept in Torre Abbey’s tithe barn (Torquay). In the ensuing centuries, a number of myths and folkloric legends were created in connection with the wretched Spanish prisoners in Torre Abbey (also known as the “Spanish Barn”), who died of thirst, starvation and ill treatment at the hands of the English or due to the appalling conditions of their captivity. In *The History of Torquay* (1878), the local historian J. T. White wrote about “village gossips” that included sightings of ghosts in the area: they were supposed to be the spirits of those dead captives in the Spanish Barn.

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) had always felt a special liking for the topics of the Spanish Armada and the Royal Navy and the historical figure of Drake. Examples of his interest were the poems “The Song of Diego Valdez” (1903)⁹ and “When the Great Ark” (1908) and the short story “Simple Simon” in *Rewards and Fairies* (1910). “The Song of Diego Valdez” is about a High Admiral of Spain who has been successful in life and in his career, but now feels nostalgic about his youth. Kipling may have given the name of Diego Valdez to his literary Spanish admiral under the influence of the Don Pedro de Valdes whose galleon Drake captured, or perhaps in remembrance of Don Pedro de Valdes’s cousin and personal rival, Don Diego Flores de Valdes, another

⁹Although its stanza three had seen the light both as the heading of *Kim* (1901) and in *Cassell’s Magazine* (April, 1901), the complete form of the poem was first published in *The Five Nations* (1903). According to Hamer, Kipling’s “The Song of Diego Valdez” was republished in later editions of his poetry (1919, 1940), in *Songs of the Sea* (1927), and in *A Choice of Songs from the Verse of Rudyard Kipling* (1925) (Hamer, n. d.).

prominent commander of the Spanish Armada.

A popular play in pre-WWI Britain was the patriotic light opera *Drake: A Pageant Play in Three Acts* (1912),¹⁰ by Louis N(apoleon) Parker (1852-1944). Parker was a versatile Anglo-American-French playwright and composer specialised in historical plays and dramatic adaptations of biographies and novels. It premiered in London in 1912 and ran for 221 performances in "His Majesty's Theatre", London, and years later, in 1935, it was converted into the film *Drake of England*. Its Act III, titled "The Fortunate and Invincible Armada", is dedicated to narrating Drake's role in the English victory. The cast is predictable: on the English side, Drake and Queen Elizabeth (the protagonists), Burleigh, Howard, Hawkins, Raleigh, a number of characters representing the English folk, English soldiers, noblemen and noblewomen, etc. On the Spanish side, apart from the ubiquitous Don Pedro de Valdes, at this stage augmented to the unofficial rank of main representative and spokesman of the Spanish enemy fleet, another three relevant Spanish characters participate in the play. These are Don Guerau D'Espes (i.e. Guerau de Espés, 1524-72, Spanish ambassador expelled from Elizabeth's court), Don Pedro Zubiaur (c.1541-1605, Spanish spy and admiral, persecutor of Drake, detained in England for conspiracy against the English monarch and imprisoned in the Tower of London), and Don Bernardino de Mendoza (c.1540-1604, the diplomat who substituted Espés as ambassador in the English court, but was later expelled too for his participation in the Throckmorton Plot against Queen Elizabeth in 1584). The opera also includes a number of nameless Spanish soldiers and sailors.

However, two interesting aspects of Parker's musical play attract our attention. On the one hand, the inclusion of two new "Spanish" characters, two maroons, Pedro, a chieftain, and Die-

¹⁰ Parker's opera was reviewed anonymously under the title "'Drake'. Sir Herbert Tree's Navy Drama" in *The Daily Mail*, July 3rd, 1912.

go, a young one, both of them with Spanish names, for they were unfortunate slaves until they rebelled against their cruel Spanish masters and sided with Drake's English forces when they had the chance. The names Pedro (arguably known among the English folk due to the "popularity" of Don Pedro de Valdes) and Diego (arguably easily remembered in English history especially after the Spanish ambassador Diego Hernando de Acuña, Count of Gondomar, of infamous recollection in James I's reign due to his excessively powerful influence on England's weak monarch, or after another commander of the Armada, Don Diego Flores de Valdes) seem to be two of the most frequent first names used in English literature for Spanish men characters, especially the latter. Another relevant novelty of Parker's play is the theatrical performance of Drake's capture of Valdes's vessel, being this episode the only one depicting the combat between the Armada and the English fleet on stage.

As historiography has of late proved, the capture of Valdes's galleass was the only real Armada event where the historical Drake seems to have had a relevant proven participation. This well-known episode was indeed a minor military action among the cascade of warlike events taking place throughout the duration of Spain's "Enterprise of England". Indeed, according to the "Sir Francis Drake" entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (written by Ernle Bradford and Felipe Fernández-Armesto, 2023), "Drake appropriated a prize – a Spanish galleon disabled in an accidental collision – but, although credited by legend with a heroic role, is not known to have played any part in the fighting". However, the seizure of the vessel is described in the play as one of the highlights of England's victorious actions against the imminent Spanish threat. In act III, scene II, Parker endeavours to make Drake and Valdes's conversation on board of Drake's "Revenge" as realistic as possible by using an interpreter (Tom). However, the Spanish admiral's intervention is clearly intended to praise the English hero in front of the English audience. The character of Don Pedro de Valdes collaborates to the aggrandisement of his

English opponent by asking the interpreter,

“Is your Captain ‘El Draque?’” When Tom replies affirmatively, the Spaniard exclaims: “I yield!” straight away. He then adds: “Had we not fallen into the hands of the most famous of English Captains, whose valour and generosity are proverbial, even among his greatest foes, we would have put up a fight.” (1912: 110-11)

English drama, poetry, fiction and folklore did not stop recreating, spreading, adapting, rewriting and even making up all types of heroic deeds of Drake’s against Catholic Spain, England’s traditional archenemy. Sometimes apocryphal adventures were purposely distorted, but most of all passed into official English historiography all the same. The best-known example of a pseudo-historical event of Drake’s life is the Plymouth Hoe bowling episode. Many other true or fictional passages of his personal life were passed by word of mouth as genuine depictions of the most humanised side of the English hero. His countless virtues were emphasised, and his slight blemishes, when existing, were either transformed into witty, charming or cunning outcomes of his shiny personality, or obliterated altogether. Drake was invested with almost superhuman and/or magic powers that invariably depicted him as the very epitome of the English genius: patriotic, (Protestant) God-fearing, courageous and enterprising. On the opposite side was Don Pedro de Valdes, a vilified prototype of the Spanish race: a servile, selfish and proud coward who surrendered in the most unmanly manner, i.e., without even putting up a fight.

Anything cunning, daring and honourable in the conduct of the English navy against the Spanish Armada in 1588, indeed any brilliant military or maritime manoeuvre was attributed to Drake. This included the largely overrated heroism attributed to his confiscation of the “Nuestra Señora del Rosario”, but also to other military actions such as the first idea of the attack of the eight fireships in the compact Spanish formation at the battle of Gravelines, or the generous sharing of the rich bounty of Spanish

doublons obtained in the capture of Don Pedro de Valdes's galleon with the shipcrew of the "Revenge", to name but a few. With the exception of the other great heroine of the day, Queen Elizabeth, no other historical English participant rivals with Drake in relevance in the fictional or poetic production arising from the Spanish Armada chapter of English history. The brilliance and genius allotted to Drake by historiography, legend and folklore has allowed him to practically monopolise the role of spiritual leader of the Royal Navy in the eyes of the English folk, to the extent of leaving Lord Howard, the real Lord High Admiral of the Royal Navy by appointment of the Queen, in a mere second place of significance and popularity in the English defence against the Spanish Armada.

According to Wathen (2009: 16), Drake's mythological construction started as soon as he finished his circumnavigation in 1580. However, more recent English historiography seems to be more comfortable now with admitting his piratical activities and with reducing the legendary qualities granted to him in previous centuries. Indeed, more updated English historiography shows some reluctance to accept the capture of Valdes as an extraordinary heroic war action. Quinn admits in his *Sir Francis Drake as Seen by His Contemporaries* (1996) that the famous English mariner had piracy and selfishness in his DNA, for he "made sure even in the Armada campaign that [Don Pedro de Valdes's] injured galleon detached from the Spanish fleet should become his prize, even if it meant endangering his squadron's effectiveness" (1996: 3).

It goes without saying that in the Spanish literature of the time,¹¹ Drake was more often than not depicted as the very incar-

¹¹The most relevant of whom were Juan de Castellanos, Miguel de Cervantes, André Falcão de Resende, Antonio Mira de Amescua, Bartolomé Cairasco de Figueroa, Lope de Vega, Martín del Barco Centenera, Juan de Miramontes Zuázola, Bartolomé Leonardo de Argensola, as well as other lesser Spanish poets and playwrights of the time (Ríos Taboada 2021). None of them, as far as I have been able to ascertain, mention Drake's military action in connection with the "Nuestra

nation of pure evil, the epitome of the “corsario luterano”, but he was sometimes also described with sheer admiration. Drake’s presence in the context of the Spanish Armada of 1588, where he did not have such shining conduct despite his post of vice-admiral and second-in-command of the English navy, was only rarely mentioned by the Spanish poets, for his only recognised action against the Gran Armada had been the capture of “Nuestra Señora del Rosario”, hardly a heroic deed to write home about. Most of the Spanish literary production on Drake during the 16th and 17th centuries concentrated on narrating or describing his privateering and piratical activities in the Spanish-American territories, on his treacherous attacks on the Spanish coasts, and to a lesser extent on his pillaging Spanish interests throughout his world circumnavigation between 1577 and 1580. Hardly ever on his far from epic participation in the Armada episode of 1588.

After analysing the main literary and historiographic production written in England from 1588, the year of the Gran Armada and Admiral Don Pedro de Valdes’s capture by Drake, a new character type begins to take shape as the perfect archetype of England’s enemy and therefore a frequent antagonist in the fictional, propagandistic and pseudo-historical literature written on the Armada or on things Spanish at the end of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th century. Due to his condition of Spaniard in a period of marked anti-Spanish and anti-Catholic feeling, the new character of Don Pedro de Valdes, a real flesh and blood representative of all the clichéd flaws of the Spaniards in the eyes of the English, was often used in the relevant English works written at the time to provide a face and a personality to the newest Spanish antagonist. At the same time, Drake, a popular model of an English gentleman, was aggrandized in opposition to the mediocre figure of Valdes. Although Drake was vice-admiral of the English fleet, he did not particularly stand out in his confrontation with the Spanish Armada, the most remembered

event in relation to him being his seizure of the galleass “Our Lady of the Rosary”. However, Drake’s opportunistic confiscation of Valdes’s ship and bounty was described in the English written texts of the time as a heroic military action and repeated *ad nauseam* for the praise and glory of the famous corsair and adventurer, a highflying hero who was already benefitting from the popular and literary construction of a mythologized English model for times of England’s Protestant and commercial expansionism.

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