LISI, LISA, AND THE CABALLERO DE LA TENAZA.

Aficionados of don Francisco de Quevedo's love-poetry have speculated for almost four hundred years about the lady whose identity is concealed, not revealed, by the poem sequence to Lisi. Who was this lady? What social station did she hold in real life? What was her relationship with the poet? Why did that relationship cause don Francisco to write such outstanding, anguished poems over a period of twenty-two years? Some critics have suggested that Lisi did not even exist, save as a figment of the poet's imagination. And yet Quevedo's *Canta Sola A Lisi* still moves the reader to such an extent that it is difficult to imagine these poems as other than the direct result of a lived experience. Unfortunately there are many unknowns, and since there is virtually no documentary evidence, there are few reliable answers to these intriguing questions.

Even González de Salas, who knew so much about Quevedo, seems to have been unaware of the real identity of Lisi, for, writing about Quevedo's beloved, he stated that "*Lisi y Lísida* nombra don Francisco la suya; y conforme a la costumbre común, que ninguno en esto ignora, Luisa parece se debía de llamar, si ya no fuese más distante el nombre, y con cautela, como también sucede, dando al recato y al respecto esa disimulación, la significase de aquel modo en la exterior apariencia".[1]

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1 Francisco de Quevedo: *Obra poética,* ed. J. M. Blecua, Madrid, Castalia, 1969, I, p. 117. All references to the love-poetry are to this edition and will be contained in the text.

Astrana Marín followed up González de Salas's hint and suggested that Quevedo's beloved must have been "Luisita de la Cerda, de la Casa de Medinaceli" who "dejó herido para siempre su pecho".[2] However, it must be noted, as José Manuel Blecua has claimed on at least two occasions, that Astrana Marín's assertions go completely undocumented.[3] Fernando Valera, on the other hand, compared sonnet 446 which begins "Esta, por ser, ¡Oh Lisi!, la primera / flor"[4] with its interesting variant "Esta, por ser, Belisa, la primera / flor" and concluded that "Lisi o Bel-isa, no es sino trastrocamiento primero, y reducción después del nombre Isa-bel".[5] Valera then suggested that Quevedo's beloved was "Isabel de Borbón, hija de Enrique IV, que tan ardientes pasiones despertó en la corte de Felipe IV su esposo".[6]

The association between the names Isabel, Belisa, and Lisa is interesting and, in 1977, in a little book entitled *Towards a Chronology of Quevedo's Poetry,* I suggested that the names Lisi, Lisis, and Lísida should be associated with the sequence Isabel, Isbela, Belisa, Elisa, and Lisa.[7] There were two reasons for making this association. In the first place, when the variants of the poem sequence to Lisi are compared with the final versions of the poems, then two more cases of name correspondence can be isolated: Lisi (A)—Lisa (B) in sonnet 487, and Lisi (A)—Elisa (B) in poem 510. The evidence of the variants thus strengthens Valera's argument that Lisi might relate to Isabel—Belisa rather than to Luisa. In the second place I suggested that since the names Isabel and Li-

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2 L. Astrana Marín: *La vida turbulenta de Quevedo,* Madrid, Gran Capitán, 1945, p. 516.

3 See Francisco de Quevedo: *Poesía original,* ed. J. M. Blecua, 2.ª ed., Barcelona, Planeta, 1968, p. 492, and Francisco de Quevedo: *Poesía amorosa,* ed. J. M. Blecua, Salamanca, Anaya, 1965, p. 14.

4 See note 1.

5 Fernando Valera: "Reinvención de D. Francisco de Quevedo", *Cuadernos,* 34, 1959, p. 65-74.

6 Valera, p. 71.

7 *Towards a Chronology of Quevedo's Poetry,* Fredericton, York Press, 1977, p. 7-8. See also my doctoral dissertation *A Stylistic Study of the Love Poetry of Quevedo,* Toronto, 1975, p. 184.

sa are linked in certain printed and manuscript versions of the *Cartas del Caballero de la Tenaza*[8] then one could postulate that Lisi's real name was probably Isabel.

The suggested dates for the poem sequence to Lisi now assume real importance. There seem to be three methods for establishing the chronology of these poems. The first is to date them by stylistic analysis, but the insoluble problems caused by Quevedo's continuous polishing and rewriting render this method most untrustworthy. The second is to date the poems in accordance with the life of the lady to whom they were written. Using this method, Astrana Marín claims that the poems to Lisi (doña Luisa de la Cerda) were written between 1609 and 1631 (or between 1613 and 1633).[9] F. Valera, on the other hand, shows that the poems to his Lisi (Isabel de Borbón) were composed between 1620 and 1643.

The third method which is much more accurate is to determine the chronology of the sequence *Canta Sola a Lisi* from those few poems which have been reliably dated. Certain of the poems to Lisi can be assigned to the early sixteen hundreds. J. O. Crosby[10] and J. G. Fucilla[11] have suggested that poem 467 was written shortly after 1608 since it contains reminicences of a sonnet by Marino which was published in that year. Poem 480 must have been composed after 1613 since its second line is reminiscent of the first verses of Góngora's first *Soledad.*[12] The C variant of poem 509 is most interesting. It can be found in the Naples manuscript which dates from 1615-16; moreover, according to Henry Ettinghausen,[13] this is another of the few autograph manuscripts which have survived. The B variant of poem 510 is also in

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8 *Towards a Chronology*, p. 8.

9 Valera, p. 71.

10 James O. Crosby: *En torno a la poesía de Quevedo*, Madrid, Castalia, 1967, p. 110.

11 J. G. Fucilla: "Riflessi dell'*Adone* di G. B. Marino nelle poesie di Quevedo", *Romania: Scritti offerti a Francesco Piccolo*, Napoli, 1962, p. 284-85.

12 Quevedo: *Obra poética*, I, p. 662.

13 Henry Ettinghausen: "Un nuevo manuscrito autógrafo de Quevedo", *BRAE*, 52, 1972, p. 211-84; especially pp. 217, 218.

the Naples manuscript, and it should be noted that the variant was directed to Elisa ("pues si os mirara Elisa es evidente / que ardieras mirte i que abrasaras fuente" 11. 23-24) whilst the A version was dedicated to Lisi ("Pues si os mirara Lisi, es evidente / que ardieras, mirto, y que abrasaras, fuente"). This evidence, then, slight as it is, suggests that the *Canta Sola a Lisi* sequence was composed early in the seventeenth century and that certain poems to Lisi (509, 510) were contemporary whith Quevedo's sojourn in Naples (1613-19).

These proposed dates are especially interesting since the names Belisa, Elisa, and Isbela can be found in six early poems (318B, 402, 419, 432, 446B, and 510B)[14] of which two have been dated by José Manuel Blecua. These are poem 318B ("por la alusión al Henares, podría fecharse la versión B hacia 1598")[15] and poem 432 ("por las alusiones al Pisuerga y al nombre de Fabio, se podría fechar hacia 1604").[16] This early dating also corresponds to the time period of the *Cartas del Caballero de la Tenaza,* for although the *Cartas...* did not appear in print until much later (Valencia and Barcelona: 1627; Ruan: 1629; and Madrid: 1629)[17], three of the manuscripts contain letters which are dated in early October of the year 1600.[18] These, together with the curious letter which Fray Benito Bernardo de Morales sent to Quevedo on January 17, 1613, suggest that the letters were not only written at the beginning of the sixteen hundreds, but that they had received wide circulation by the year 1613.[18a]

The name of Lisa is to be found in the third letter of the Ruan

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14 *Towards a Chronology*, p. 7.

15 Quevedo: *Obra poética,* I, p. 501.

16 Quevedo: *Obra poética,* I, p. 622.

17 Francisco de Quevedo: *Obras,* ed. A. Fernández-Guerra, Madrid, Atlas, 1946, I, p. 453.

18 3rd October, 1600, Ms. 3706 of the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, fol. 330. 7th October, 1600, Ms. 9073 of the Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid, fol. 297. 8th October, 1600, Ms. 136 of the Biblioteca de Menéndez Pelayo, letter 3.

18a Quevedo: *Obras,* p. 453

edition of the *Cartas...*[19] A. Fernández Guerra reproduced the name in a note,[20] but F. Buendía reprinted the Ruan text in her Aguilar edition, the relevant section of which follows:

> Cuanto más me pide vuesa merced, más me enamora y menos la doy. ¡Miren donde fue a hallar que pedir pasteles hechizos! Que aunque a mí me es fácil enviar los pasteles y a vuesa merced hacer los hechizos, he querido suspenderlo por ahora. Vuesa merced muerda de otro enamorado; que para mí peor es verme comido de mujeres que de gusanos: porque vuesa merced come los vivos, y ellos los muertos. Adiós Lisa. Hoy día de ayuno.[21]

The name of Isabel, on the other hand, does not appear in the printed versions of the *Cartas...* although it can be found in two of the manuscripts, in both of which it occurs in a slightly anti-clerical letter which is omitted from the final printed versions. F. Buendía reproduces the manuscript from the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, in her Aguilar edition:

> Entendámonos, mi señora doña Isabel: todo lo sufriré; pero que me diga gritando y contra el fraile, que así fueran todos, eso no es de sufrir.[22]

Doña Isabel's name is also connected with this letter in the manuscript which can be seen in the Biblioteca de Menéndez Pelayo in Santander.[23]

The above, then, is the evidence on which I base the following hypotheses:

(1) the name sequence Isabel, Isbela, Belisa, Elisa, Lisa, Lisi, Lisis, Lísida conceals one person, a lady by the name of Isabel who must, at the present stage of our investigations, remain unidentified;

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19 Francisco de Quevedo: *Obras completas*, ed. Felicidad Buendía, I, 6.ª ed., Madrid, Aguilar, 1966, p. 77-86.

20 Quevedo: *Obras*, p. 455.

21 Quevedo: *Obras completas*, ed. Buendía, p. 79.

22 Quevedo: *Obras completas*, ed. Buendía, p. 86.

23 Ms. 136 of the Biblioteca de Menéndez Pelayo, letter 6.

(2) Quevedo wrote the poem sequence in which he *Canta Sola a Lisi y la amorosa pasión de su amante* to her under her pseudonym of Lisi;
(3) he wrote the *Cartas del Caballero de la Tenaza* to her (a) under her real name (mi señora doña Isabel...) and (b) under her pseudonym of Lisa;
(4) the poems to Lisi were written early (but extensively revised), probably between the years 1598 and 1621, approximately.

Can the *Cartas...* be considered autobiographical? Fernández Guerra certainly thought so and he claimed that they were "no fábula, en su origen son á mi ver históricas y verdaderas: chuscadas, mocedades y travesuras de Quevedo. Conozco de igual índole papeles suyos privados, sacudiéndose de embestidoras y busconas, y de ellos hubo que fué origen de irritación y encrudecimiento en sus últimas persecuciones".[24] Further, Fernández Guerra considered certain of the descriptions contained in the *Cartas...* to be virtual self-portraits of Quevedo's student life, as can be seen from the following passage and its revealing commentary:

> Hánme dicho, señora, que el otro dia hicieron vuesa merced y su tia burla de mi miseria, y ha sido tanta la que mi mezquindad ha hecho de vuesa merced, que estamos pagados. Cuéntanme que me hallaron mil faltas, y que todo se les fué en apodarme y reirse, y que decian que parecia esto y parecia estotro, y que parecia al otro. Yo confieso que lo parezco todo, como mi dinero no padezca. Hame caido en gracia lo que dijo con un diente y media muela la señora Encina: "¡Qué caraza de estudiantón! ¡Y qué labia! Hiede á perros, y no se le caerá un real si le queman".[25]

Fernández Guerra's commentary follows:

> ¿No es este el retrato del estudiante pobre, corto de vista, de ojos malos, y de piés derrengados y torpes? ¿No echaban en cara tales defectos á QUEVEDO los autores del *Tribunal de la justa venganza*, páginas 163 y 173? Mírense las cartas como históricas, y no se hallará palabra que no venga á robustecer semejante pensamiento.[26]

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24 Quevedo: *Obras*, p. 453.
25 Quevedo: *Obras*, p. 455.
26 Quevedo: *Obras*, p. 455.

Now, if the Lisi of the love-poetry and the Lisa of the *Cartas...* indeed be one and the same person, what can the *Cartas...* tell us of Quevedo´s relationship whith his beloved? In the first place, the author of these letters is a student " ¡Qué caraza de estudiantón!" who is completely aware of his poverty "¿Qué figura quiere vuesa merced que haga un estudiantón entre Julios y Octavios, hablando dineros y escupiendo reales?" (letter 8). He is either penniless or else reduced to such financial straits that he has to count every penny. Certainly he cannot compete whith the richer rivals who surround his beloved "pues entre todas las naciones, sólo el pobre es el extranjero, y ha menester ser un mohatrón para que le entiendan esos señores" (letter 8). As a result he sees both himself and his beloved as victims of the purchasing power of these individuals "en conclusión, yo estaba como vendido y vuesa merced como comprada" (letter 8).

The sender of the letters is also jealous and suspicious of the people who enter the beloved´s home to compete whith him. This can be seen from the following letter, slightly anti-clerical in nature, which does not appear in the Ruan edition, although Buendía reproduces it from the manuscript in the Biblioteca Nacional:

> Díceme vuesa merced que en su casa no entran hombres, y entran frailes. Voto a Dios, que deseo saber quién le ha persuadido que los frailes no son hombres; porque ellos no tendrán esta culpa, que persuadirán a que lo son a una serpiente. Querría que vuesa merced me dijera por qué género de animal los tiene, o con qué otro nombre disfraza sus obras. Los primeros días que fuí a recibir merced, me daban susto: porque eran tantos los compañeros que estaban por aquellos corredores, que preguntaba si había difunto. Ahora sé que, aunque no le haya, vienen por cuerpo. No he visto en mi vida hija de tantos padres.[27]

There is no clue as to the duration of the affair, save for a witty statement in an early letter (letter 7) that "dos meses, tres días, y seis horas ha que vuesa merced y dos viejas, tres amigas, un paje y su hermano me pacen de día y de noche; de que estoy des-

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27 Quevedo: *Obras completas*, ed. Buendía, p. 85.

truído y seco". This hyperbole is clearly satirical. Yet the affair would seem to have had its serious side, for in letter 21 the sender of the letters writes of marriage:

> Peligroso debe de estar de honra y caudal, pues siendo la extremaunción de las pediduras el pedir casamiento, a falta de otra cosa me pide vuesa merced palabra de casamiento. Dígame, reina, ¿qué paciencia o sufrimiento me ha columbrado, que me codicia para marido? Yo tengo cara de soltero y condición de viudo, que no me duran una semana dos pares de mujeres; y es imposible que no sea género de venganza el quererse vuesa merced casar conmigo, conociéndote y conociéndome... Maride por otra parte; que yo he determinado morir ermitaño de mi rincón, donde son más apacibles telarañas que suegras... Si vuesa merced me quiere para mientras marida, o como para marido, o para entre marido, aquí me tiene corriente y moliente.[28]

However, the fictional element of these letters must be emphasized, for in a manuscript letter we read "Si digo porque entra en casa el padre fray predicador, me dice vuesa merced que así fueran todos; si el portugués, que viene a negociar con su cuñado; si Fabio Ricardo, que es amigo de su marido".[29] *Cuñado* and *marido* suggest an affair with a married woman, and this would clearly contradict the marriage proposal of the twenty-first letter. However, such an illicit affair would also account for the anguish of some of the love-poems.

Whether the beloved be married or unmarried, the affair must have ended abruptly and unsuccessfully, for letter 23, the last in the Ruan collection, speaks of the pregnancy of the beloved and of her hasty rejection by the author of the letters:

> Díceme vuesa merced que está preñada, y lo creo, porque el ejercicio que vuesa merced tiene no es para menos. Quisiera ser comadre para ofrecerme al parto; que compadres sobrarán en el bautizo mil... Lo que importa es empreñarse a diestro y a siniestro, parir a troche y moche y echarlo a Dios y a ventura... Y alumbre Dios a vuesa merced con bien. Y si se le antojare algo, sea lo primero no acordarse de mí.[29a]

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28 Quevedo: *Obras completas*, ed. Buendía, p. 84.
29 Quevedo: *Obras completas*, ed. Buendía, p. 85-86.
29a Quevedo: *Obras completas*, ed. Buendía, p. 84.

At this stage, of course, it is completely impossible, without further documentary evidence, to sort fact from fiction. Was Isabel–Lisa married? Was she of high social standing, or merely a common courtesan? Did she become pregnant as the result of a passionate, physical relationship with don Francisco de Quevedo? Did she blame don Francisco for the child she was carrying when in fact somebody else was the father, or when the father was a person (or persons!) unknown? Was there, in actual fact, a child at all, or is this merely a completely fictionalised account?

Clearly, we have no answers to these questions, and yet a very interesting picture emerges from the *Cartas...* of an impoverished Quevedo, still in university, attracted and captivated by a beautiful young lady who is already surrounded by a host of wealthy admirers with whom Quevedo cannot compete. That he eventually loses the lady seems highly likely, and that he guarded a memory of her for the next twenty-two years is more than probable, given the evidence of the anniversary sennets in the love-poetry.

How would such a hypothesis affect our reading of the love-poetry, and, in particular, our reading of the poems to Lisi? In the first place we would be reading about a real, painful affair, and not just about a poet's imaginings upon a mythical lady. Then there would be psychological reasons which would account for the metaphysical tension which Arthur Terry sees in the conceits.[30] An unsuccessful love-affair which terminated in the beloved's pregnancy and her marriage to another, would confirm A. A. Parker's theories that the love-poetry expresses a conflict between passion and reason,[31] for clearly the relationship would have been a stormy oné in which money (and the lack of it) played a major role –"yo estaba como vendido y vuesa merced como comprada"–. If the beloved were lost on purely financial (and perhaps physical –"el otro día hicieron vuesa merced y su

30 Arthur Terry: "Quevedo and the Metaphysical Conceit", *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 35, 1958, p. 214.

31 A. A. Parker: "La agudeza en algunos sonetos de Quevedo", *Estudios dedicados a Menéndez Pidal*, 3, 1952, p. 353.

tía burla de mi miseria"–) grounds, then we could also account for the *desgarrón afectivo* which Dámaso Alonso sees as the key to this verse,[32] as well as for the "construcciones únicas, originales, tan modernas además, que se clavan como garras en el ánimo del lector", which are so important for José Manuel Blecua.[33] In fact, such a hypothesis would confirm the penetrating words of Dámaso Alonso that Quevedo was "un atormentado... con esta misma angustia que tú y yo sentimos".[34] It would also add a completely new dimension to the have-and-have-not situation which Otis Green saw as the key to his version of Courtly Love[35] and would enable us to interpret from a completely different point of view the process of *desautomatización* which J. M. Pozuelos Yvancos has recently described.[36]

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32 Dámaso Alonso: "El desgarrón afectivo en la poesía de Quevedo", en *Poesía española*, Madrid, Gredos, 5.ª ed., 1966, p. 575-76.

33 Quevedo: *Poesía original*, p. XC.

34 Alonso: "El desgarrón...", p. 575-76.

35 Otis Green: *Courtly Love in Quevedo*, Colorado, Boulder, 1952.

36 J. M. Pozuelo Yvancos: *El lenguaje poético de la lírica amorosa de Quevedo*, Murcia, Secretariado de Publicaciones, Universidad de Murcia, 1979, p. 95-229.