

Miscellaneous Games

Gioachino Greco claimed to be a remarkable Italian chess player and writer who lived in post-renaissance Italy. He was born 1600 and lived no longer than thirty four years. He recorded his own chess games out of which those that he played at the age of twenty are considered to be the most interesting ones. These so called “Miscellaneous Games” contain various original tricky moves, with which Gioachino Greco, in most of the cases, defeated his, mostly anonymous, opponents named “NN” (lat. *nomen nescio*).

That same year, 1620, Greco played the game that will be represented through this text. He, as a White, opened this game with the famous and one of the oldest chess openings – *King’s Gambit*. In chess terminology *gambit* represents a sacrifice in the opening. The sacrifice is always made by the player with white figures. Due to this sacrifice White gains more space – more opportunities to widen his later moves. The “King’s Gambit” is performed by pawns, which means that the game begins with following moves:

1. e4 e5
2. f4.

These first three moves define “King’s Gambit”. As described by chess analysts, “White offers a pawn to divert the Black e-pawn and wants to build a stronger center with d2-d4. Theory has shown that in order for Black to maintain the one pawn advantage, moves must be made that seriously weaken the position of the black pieces.”¹

Of course, the course of the game depends on a Black player too. Black has two possibilities: to accept, or to decline the gambit. Therefore, the variations of the King's Gambit are split in two categories *King's Gambit Accepted* and *King's Gambit Declined*. Yet the *Accepted* one is more common.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/King%27s_Gambit

While reading the text it is kindly advised to open this link <http://chessgames.com/perl/chessgame?gid=1272513> and enjoy another miscellaneous game of Gioachino Greco and the anonymous player.

The game from 1620 will start again within few minutes of words.

The game itself is characterized as a game of determined, slightly aggressive moves with which both players exchange roles of the attacked and the defended. This is happening throughout the whole game, due to the tactics of defense. When they find themselves in a position of the one defending, they rather choose to defend themselves by a new attack. This feature categorized this game into the openings *King's Gambit Accepted*.

Miscellaneous Game 1620 · *King's Gambit: Accepted. Bishop's Gambit Greco Variation* · (C33): 1-0

White – Gioachino Greco

Black – NN

1. e4 e5

2. f4

Sacrifice of the fluency of form

“What I desire is your beauty, all else is pretext!”²

Words desire. Word’s desire. The word is the desire. To desire the word.

Although not admitted by the world, the world consists of words. It is bounded by the space of words that constantly change their places through the figures of our mind. They possess an unarticulated force which thrust them, pushes, trails and shuffles them so they could draw the space of the world. Such desirable force makes the words draw their lines and makes them form their letters.

² Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 222

Letters belong to the world. The same world created by the letters themselves, with their own drawings. There is noticeable fluency in letter's shapes reflecting the shape of the world and its human relations. This happens via shapes of the single letter or a whole word, or a sentence.

By paying more attention to the shape of the letters out of which these very words is now being formed, one can easily notice that this text is just being shaped by the letters that look like small bricks. They are straight, as if sharply cut, and disciplined like insects. These letters are not keen on passing the fluency of the letters' drawing, which does not mean these words are necessarily deprived from their potential to create.

For example, if I was allowed to write in Arabic letter, maybe these words would produce more fluid. Perhaps would be their form that possesses more power in performing and articulating the force, the unarticulated desire. Perhaps the words would even desire more successfully if they were reshaped in capillary, rather long, serpentine Arabic letters which possess plants' elegance.

It seems this text in Latin script has sacrificed its fluency of form.

Elegance claims to be beautiful. But beauty does not claim to be elegant always. If the words desire their elegant forms, do they evoke the beauty more intense?

It is the way they desire that forms their text, their space, their world. The way they desire is the way they love. And vice versa, the way the desire makes them is the way they make love. And all else is pretext!

2. exf4 (Response of a Black to White's opening with King's Gambit. The Black accepts King's Gambit – White's sacrifice of a pawn f4)

Game of seduction, the world of poetry embraced - accepted

The quote “What I desire is your beauty, all else is pretext!” is a verse belonging to prose text written by biographer Aşık Çelebi who lived in Ottoman empire in the first part of 16th century.³ He wrote the story about not very notorious poet Me'ali, who lived in Istanbul during the reign of Bayezit II. He was though famous for being a lover of boys. The story goes that he fell in love helplessly to one of the beardless boys (who at the time presented the desirable objects of love). Ma'eli is completely seduced by the boy and the story is led by this desire. The boy has been described in this game of seduction: “Meanwhile, the darling boy made his brows

³ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 222

an attractive single line with seductive looks and laughter; he gave twist and curl to his locks with coyness and reproaches, with coquetries and enticements.”⁴

The story of Ma’eli belongs many of stories that evolved during the 16th century in Ottoman Empire. These stories, prose and poetry, in their own specific way witness the social life of Ottoman centers. In nowadays consciousness “societal behaviour is *scripted* behaviour”⁵ it is rather easier to imagine the importance of the role that any script carries and how it helps creating social preferences. To discuss the development of the social preferences considering the topic of love and desiring does not make much sense in this case. The reason for this is the fact that societal behaviours of past centuries, if described at all, were described by the discourse of history which was/has been/is strictly defined by political and social normative of recent times. These normative, defined by authoritarian power and performed by society, are not likely to accept the topic that could subvert the normative. Despite this fact, what strikes the attention is that during the Ottoman era the scripted behaviour (of course, that one which today is categorized as literature) supported and helped the subversive behaviour to develop. The 16th century Ottoman centers were places of high culture, with extremely developed trade and the art tradition. Ottoman literature, especially poetry had at the time strong tradition due to the Sufi poetry which flourished in Anatolia since the 13th century. Sufi seekers as Rumi or Yunus Emre with their *Diwan* poetry enriched the Ottoman poetry and established an authority of themes, motives and poetic forms. Since Rumi wrote his major work *Masnavi* in Persian, he brought specific motives and objects of desire to Ottoman literature.

The Sufi desire is a mystical, philosophical craving for Unity which was lost when being born into this world. Therefore the life of a Sufi seeker represents a symbolic carnal cry for the Unity, for the God. Throughout the various rituals that they performed or in their poetry, their painful, seeking desire was expressed.

Sufi seekers, also called *dervishes*, were very bonded to the common people and used their words to seduce them. *The Way of the Word* was highly important. The life of dervishes was greatly defined by the order they belonged to. Not all the dervish orders wrote poetry. Those

⁴ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 222

⁵ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 37

who did, created poetry of love, peace, surrender, rebellion or war, which was the very part of their lived experiences. Their poetry, especially of the ones who wrote in Turkish, such as Yunus Emre in 13th century Anatolia, was/has been/is highly celebrated, in those days triggering different many political and social effects such as peace, rebellion or war. Their poetry, their lives and know-hows were true triggers of social movements among people of the Ottoman Empire.

Many of the Sufis (dervish orders as well) neither were welcomed by the Ulema, nor by the Ottoman court. Very often they were prosecuted, exiled and tortured. Rumi, on the other hand, belongs to the tradition of Sufis which were highly appreciated and supported by the Ottoman court. The Court prospered by the presence of many intellectuals from Islamic world who travelled to Ottoman Empire (Konya) to meet Rumi. But at the same time, the same Rumi was not accepted by the common people from the very simple reason: they could not understand Persian.

No matter from whom they were acknowledged, it was Sufi's word that caused and helped to develop certain social behaviours. Belonging to each of the streams, meant sacrifice and prosper from different perspectives. In both cases, but from opposite positions the poetry, the word, the world of poetry was embraced – accepted.

3. Bc4 Qh4+ (White moves the Bishop to prevent the potential castling of the Black. Black moves the Queen - check)

Check in the Age of the Beloveds

That early afternoon when Gioachino Greco decided to move his Bishop on a position where he would not let his opponent make the castling and hide the King it was the same move which happened, somehow, beyond the countable time, almost after four hundred years, when two authors – scholars decided to shift the focus in interpretation of Ottoman literature. In this tiny second, when Bishop moves to c4 (in poetry time has dilatations and a tiny second can last for four hundred years); in this transparent time beyond times another *age* was born, as the two authors freely called it – “The Age of Beloveds”. The two authors Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı elaborated Ottoman literature and social circumstances in comparison of the poetic-societal circumstances of the late European Renaissance. They defend the existence of *the*

Age of Beloveds by capturing certain social, cultural, political, and economic phenomena. They claim such phenomena occurred all away from England, through Germany, Italy, France, and Spain to Ottoman Empire.⁶

This is how they speak about of the love and being love in historically dated and embraced between late 15th and 17th century.

“...age of Europe and the West that we sometimes call the early-modern period or late Renaissance was also an age of beloveds, an age of love and sexual activity (given the love and sex do not always overlap) to an extent that is astonishing even to us today in what is often thought as a lax, liberal, or even libertine era. Beloveds of every sort abounded. Love was everywhere, from attachments to beloveds of the most noble and romantic sort, to the momentary quenching of desire in the arms of cheap prostitutes and the furtive groping and rubbing of young men, to the coquetries of cultured courtesans and beautiful boys who entertained the great and powerful and modeled desire for the greatest artists of the age.”⁷

Walter G. Andrews and Mehmet Kalpaklı in a preface to the book “The Age of Beloveds” mention the reactions of the Ottomanists, their colleagues when they have read the manuscript of a future book. Their colleagues warned them that many people could be irritated by these interpretations. At the same early afternoon when the two authors experienced a notion of danger, has NN, Black moved his Queen to h4 and showed his reaction to Greco’s Bishop – the first check in the game occurred.

4. Kf1 Bc5 (White moves the King, Black moves the Bishop to intensify the attack he started with the Queen)

5. d4 Bb6 (White uses the pawn to narrow the space for Black to attack. Black draws back.)

The Lover is always in Love

Andrews and Kalpaklı and Greco and NN continued playing the game. The first two of these four people claim⁸ that Ottoman love poetry was under attack during the second half of the 16th century for it was “far too worldly”.⁹ One can join to their thesis by adding that maybe it was under attack because it was far too wordy. The reason of attack lies in a motive of a beardless young man, unattached to an occupation, not married. The two authors draw parallel between Ottoman Empire and England and Italy where the same youths existed in particular

⁶ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 24

⁷ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 22

⁸ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 90

⁹ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 90

during the late 16th century and the early 17th. Kalpaklı and Andrews add that poetry was prejudged as dangerous due to the following reason: “the systems of patronage were breaking down”.¹⁰ They explain it with the desperation of the unemployed youths who needed the master who was “passionate in a way that was most elaborately and clearly scripted by notions of love and that, on the other hand made unemployed young man vulnerable to sexual exploitation.”

Hastily said, Ottoman love poetry was far too wordy because it created space where far too free love could have been consumed. The role between the lover and the beloved through poetry constantly changes; words shift positions, lines of the letters (imagining the Arabic letters) change their fluency. The lover, who is always *in love*, therefore weaker and rather helpless, is by the lines of love manipulated by the beloved. Beloved (in Ottoman literature, the beloved beardless boy) enjoys pulling the strings of someone who is in social hierarchies positioned higher than him. By the appearance and through seduction beloved regains the power over the lover; and lover testifies his craving by the words he writes for his lover. They play the game of mutual need in the chase of the hierarchy of power. When (White) the beloved narrows the space of (Black) the lover – the beloved attacks and lover draws back.

6. Nf3 Qe7 (White moves the Knight, strengthens his offence, attacks the Queen. Black draws back the Queen)

“Between males a reversal is always possible. Even though the lover may be a sultan and the beloved a boy, the slave can, by chance, become a sultan and the sultan a slave; the boy will become a man.”¹¹

7. Bxf4 Qxe4 (White uses the Bishop to capture the Pawn and with the move – the sacrifice – the King’s Gambit has been justified. Black uses the Queen to capture the Pawn e4 and that by puts him into a dangerous position where his Queen and King lie at the same line. He weakens seriously.)

8. Bxf7+ Kf8 (White captures the Pawn with a Bishop – check. Black must not capture the Bishop otherwise he loses the game, therefore he only moves the King to escape the check.)

*The lover has no other chance but to get away and shelter
The beloved is the ideal, the Absolute*

“This heart became a vagabond fool for a beautiful tailor boy
Whose lovers never suffer from a dearth of cuts the black

¹⁰ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 75

¹¹ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 21

My eye is (become a thimble), my eyelashes are needles
My bloody tears streams red silken threads, oh swatch of the moon

With anguish my mouth has narrowed 'til it seems but a chalk line
and weeping has turned the black pupil of my eye to white chalk”¹²

Gazel by Nihali

Due to the reason that Turkish, Persian, nor Ottoman languages do not reveal gender is Ottoman poetry androgynous. The question: who the beautiful beloved boys of the Age of Beloveds were, and whether they were boys at all therefore complicates. Kalpaklı and Andrews mention¹³ different in general ungendered expressions with which poets' partially distinguished beauties. *Hüsna (the most beautiful)*, *duhteler (daughter)*, *müstesna (exceptional)*, *dilbeler (heart stealers)* could have also referred to women, but authors emphasize that in most cases it was impossible to distinguish to which gender poetry referred. The connections and conclusions that it was mostly the boys to whom the poetry referred are argued and confirmed by the stories of beloveds and lovers and by the explaining the social background of the period. Following quote, a story written by the poet Hayali exemplifies the conclusion that the beloveds were mostly boys:

“Nowadays, most of the beautiful beardless-youth kind, who serve as tasty morsels for the unmanly, are the untouched boys of Arabia and the illegitimate sons of Anatolian peasants (Turks). Although the dancing boys of the European provinces are gentle, the large thick-lipped slave boys of Bosnia and Herzegovina are always amenable to service.

As regard sweet loveliness, Anatolian peasant children and the clever youths of Arabia are the most short-lived of all. By the time they reached twenty, they are no longer fit to be love objects or to be used by lovers.

According to the born rakes, the beardless Kurds are faultless and constrained to be amiable and abundantly obedient in whatever is proposed to them. Notably they dye themselves below the waist with henna and (thus) adorn themselves with a colourful gesture reaching down the knees.”¹⁴

To be a beloved boy alludes making sacrifice of freedom in terms of social hierarchy. Offering the beauty, charms, presence, and body grants the beloved the position of the object of desire. The script, the poetry inaugurate them between the people who might have greater power

¹² Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 40

¹³ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 39

¹⁴ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 141

in societies or who have the talent to memorize the existence of beloveds by a word that was through its structures (at the time) acknowledged as saint, ideal – close to the Absolute. Out of these reasons the sacrifice is worthy and love games rather sweet than bitter. It gives the beloved opportunity to enable the lover (8. Bxf7+ Kf8) after which the lover has no other chance but to get away and shelter.

9. Bg3 Nh6 (White moves the Bishop to avoid the potential attack of the Black Queen. Black is trying to widen his game with the move of Knight.)

10. Nc3 Qe7 (White reacts aggressively, he uses the same figure – the Knight and threatens the Black Queen. Black removes the Queen)

11. Bb3 c6 (White returns the Bishop for being a potentially threatened by the Black Queen. Black moves the Pawn in order to enable the White Knight to go further.)

Come, take on the masters of verse

The beloveds represented pleasure, feast. Through them life is celebrated, and the word celebrates them. Andrews and Kalpaklı describe social interactions of the period as highly eroticized, where “sex is never far beneath the surface.”¹⁵ Their interactions are competitive, teasing, often insulting. With the verse they challenge their communication and provoke the intercourse. The verse is an attack after which the pleasure game shall widen. Poets, lovers will even react aggressively mirroring the figure used in a poem trying to enable their provocative beloveds to go further with seductive plot. Two poets Sa’yi and Sani correspond each other, and Sani provokes Sa’yi expecting of him to dare to visit him and enjoy the feasts:

“If you come and honour Karabash’s Tavern
with your presence
They’d all make jaunts to the seashore
as they did of old

...

If you’ve got the balls, come
take on the masters of verse
Parade yourself about, observe
the heroic couplets of every warrior”¹⁶

¹⁵ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 143

¹⁶ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 146

12. Qd3 d5 (White moves the Queen. Black moves the Pawn.)

13. Re1 Qf7 (White invades the line towards the Black Queen. Black hides the Queen.)

14. Bd6+ Kg8 (White strikes again, moves the Bishop to the field where Black is momentarily the weakest – check. Black must baulk again.)

Desire moves like a fluid through the structure performing love

“The poem holds the veil of script
over its face like Joseph
This is its coquetry,
always to speak from behind the veil.”¹⁷

Verses by Yahya

The trick of the poetry lies in the fact that it can reveal even behind the veil. The Turkish, Persian and Ottoman languages and the poetry that was created are challenging for the European reader. Or myself, the one that has the Latin alphabet as part of the mother tongue. This matter is a pure personal preference. I enjoy these poems for they continually play with the graphic level of expression. They simultaneously hide and reveal the meanings through the shape of the letters as well. The desire, the motive, and the object of the desire are often presented by the graphic sign. The words in Arabic and Persian seem to create the veil with the lines of the letters. These lines are coquetry, they cover and represent the face of the poem; they are literally the script holding the veil.

Arabic word for poetry is *şi'r*. Consist of three letters – read from right to left – *shin, 'ayin, ra*. The word in the middle symbolizes the “eye”. The letter ‘*ayin*, has round shape in this position and resembles an eye. Andrews and Kalpaklı explain that the eye and the word *poetry – şi'r* which embraces the letter ‘*ayin* symbolizes the “analogue of a sigh, the exhalation of an eternal fire” and in many poems it “serves to melt the iron of the beloved’s heart.”¹⁸ In poems the word *şi'r* presents a strong metaphor; a figure that performs at the level of the content, form and graphic of the letter: “In the hyperemotional world of Ottoman love poetry, a lover’s

¹⁷ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 106

¹⁸ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 100

eye always weeps bloody tears, and, in this case, even the ‘eye’ of the lover’s poem weeps tears that fall on the page and form the dots that distinguish some of the Arabic-script letters.”¹⁹

At this point it should not be forgotten that Gioachino Greco and NN are still making their moves through the chess field; that they draw the figures at the field by the exact rules which they themselves did not establish. They perform by the rules of figures like the poetry performs its figures. To be a poet in Ottoman Empire meant to be skillful in art and craft, in imitating the previous poets by creating witty solutions within the given structures and contents. Poetry meant respecting the authority and ruling the words within the former aesthetic borders. Chess game respects the same borders. Since the Ottoman poetry was exclusively love poetry, it embraced, presented and created love within the prior structure. Love and the meaning of love was articulated and testified via content, very strict forms and graphic appearance. It seems (again personal...) that poetry gained the force to articulate the desire and love was intensified when put in such strong limits. The force of articulation – the desire – moved like a fluid through the structure and performed love.

Andrews and Kalpaklı highlight that “Ottoman love in the Age of Beloveds – poeticized love, or love scripted by poetry – becomes an elaborate game with its own sign and signals, its forms of speech and dialect (the dialect of poetic vocabulary, tropes, commonplaces, and rhetoric.)”²⁰

15. Re7 Qf6 (After the Black freed the line e by moving the Queen in the 13th move (Qf7), White moves the Rook and threatens the Black Queen. Black hides the Queen again.)

16. Nxd5 Qxd6 (White moves the Knight, captures Black Pawn and therefore decide to sacrifice his Bishop. Black is tricked out by the sacrifice; with the Queen he captures the White Bishop.)

Desire, the force of writing

“Come on, you with the murdering eye, the tyrant mole, you merciless
calamity
You! Beloved with the blood-drinking lips and the dart-blowing glance”

When the space of love has been established the word has an opportunity to capture the victim. It is then that word transforms into a dangerous weapon which wounds and kills motivated through the force of writing – *desire*. While Gioachino Greco and NN are drawing their risky 15th and 16th moves, the lovers and beloveds of Ottoman Empire, parted by five days

¹⁹ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 100

²⁰ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 55

ship travel suffer the enjoyable erotic violence of the verse. Andrews and Kalpaklı describe that “in the universe of the poem, the boy has all the weapons; his glances are arrows, his lashes are daggers or darts, his eyebrows bows or curved swords.”²¹

The beauty kills. Shoots arrows. A motive that is encountered both in Europe through Cupid, and through the beloved boy in the East.²² But in Ottoman poetry the image of beloved boy has malice consequence, expressed by the very naturalistic images of torture and murder. That is the way the (White) Beloved, the Love captures the (Black) Lover in the word. The Lover tries to regain the lost power, but is constantly tricked by the beloved boy who cheats him with illusive sacrifice of himself. The lover accepts the sacrifice and leads himself into a final fatal position where he will be killed, swallowed by Love.

17. Nf6+ Kf8 (The fact that Black accepted the sacrifice from the move 16. Qxd6 is now shown to be fatal. White Knight attacks the Black King – check. Black hides the King.)

The beloved, the fatal longing for Love

“Before long time of youth will flee
For fate is faithless, life is transitory”²³

The Sufi poetry of 13th and 14th century brought the essential motive – the trope of the *cupbearer of paradise* who serves the wine of desire, flame and eternity. When the Lover drinks the wine he experiences devotion in the Unity. This motive was preserved in Ottoman literature until the 18th century. During the Age of Beloveds it is often used to evoke the state of fatal longing for love that is embodied in the beloved. Describing the background of such motives Andrews and Kalpaklı add: “One of the scripted principles of pleasure or the life of wine and love can be seen and experienced as metaphors for spiritual rapture and divine love.”²⁴ The two authors mention the scripts testify that some lovers spent their fortune on opium and the boys until the drugs finally killed them.²⁵ In any age or geographic area, when it comes to delight and too much of it, it is not a surprise that it very often ends fatal.

²¹ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 264

²² Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 266

²³ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 35

²⁴ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 73

²⁵ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 73

18. Re8# (White shoots the final arrow with the Rook – check-mate. White wins.)

But this doorway...

The early afternoon when Gioachino Greco and NN started to play *Miscellaneous Game* slowly turned into night. Greco was very delighted to win. He greeted his opponent and parted for his house where he sat in his chair, drank a cup of wine and eaten a slice of cheese before going to bed. The anonymous opponent vanished in the black night. According to some unsecure sources he sailed to Istanbul. Allegedly he fell in love dreadfully in moon faced and sweet tongued barber son, with curls that fastened around his neck while passing the Istanbul streets with a smell of musk. He wrote letter to the barber son and secretly sent it by his servant. The letter contained a poem:

“Sitting thigh to thigh with a lovely ma’cuncu
I lose my mind
My mouth waters at his peach
and I lose my mind

I fear not Iskender Shah
mid the domination of this world
But this doorway, worth all the world,
makes me lose my mind

I am exceeding strange ma’cun
in the mortar of this world
The kiss of his mouth’s vial
makes me lose my mind.”²⁶

Accidentally the letter ended in barber hands who raged about the disgraceful words addressed to his son. He found the NN and cut his throat the very same day.

²⁶ Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005: 103

The moves of *Miscellaneous Game 1620* • *King's Gambit: Accepted. Bishop's Gambit Greco*

Variation • (C33): 1-0

1. e4 e5
2. f4 exf4
- 3 Bc4 Qh4+
- 4 Kf1 Bc5
- 5 d4 Bb6
- 6 Nf3 Qe7
- 7 Bxf4 Qxe4
- 8 Bxf7+ Kf8
- 9 Bg3 Nh6
- 10 Nc3 Qe7
- 11Bb3 c6
- 12 Qd3 d5
- 13 Re1 Qf7
- 14 Bd6+ Kg8
- 15 Re7 Qf6
- 16 Nxd5 Qxd6
- 17 Nf6+ Kf8
- 18 Re8# 1-0

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