

Francesco Pedraglio
Battle 71: Lepanto (1571)

Lights go off. The room is totally silent. The curtains open. Then what?

Then an aerial view of a mass gathering, she says.
Something of a mass choreography creating
the unmistakable shape of some genitalia...
or at least that's how I pictured it:
as this distinctive silhouette of a sex
seen from above.

The whole event?

Yes, the whole thing... a sex from beginning to end.
Meaning: a continuous, long-lasting display of genitals.
An odd performance, if you wish.
A person or animal's external reproductive organs
there, available to your gaze.
Or a genital (singular) as an event
revealing and displaying itself in front of your very eyes.

Is it inviting me or rejecting me?

This has been asked before, she says. This very same question actually. Numberless times.
Yet that's missing the point somewhat, as it's neither one way or the other, and you should know
better than to ask.
It simply is. The sex I mean. It is. Full stop.
There's no will involved in it. Just pure existence.

Is it female or male?

I prefer to think of it as a female sex
even though it shouldn't be exclusive to one gender or the other.
Just what makes you more comfortable, she says.
And that's what makes me more comfortable.
But I guess I'm open to counterproposals.

Is there a topography to the event?

Again, she says, I prefer to refer to it as stage directions.

Are there any stage directions for the event?

The dry land as pubic hair
 the surrounding battleships as parting lips
 tracing the unmistakable shape of a right and left horn—militarily speaking—
 each ready to close in tight defense of its opposite flank
 the jagged central line suddenly transformed into the heart of the clash.
 In the short-sighted reading of things
 the two sides—the horns, opposing—are supposedly battling each other.
 But in the larger scheme of things
 they create a perfectly balanced image:
 chaos at pure rest.

Is there movement of any kind then?

May we expect any progression?

She says you might as well think of it as a freeze-frame
 perpetually displaying the same
 perpetually immobile... like a fresco on a sacred wall
 a mental image captured while holding your breath
 a narrative device, ever so static, ever so rich in consequences.

So, does it imply any idea of its own future?

It is its own past and its own future, the present being this flickering stasis you are witnessing
 this sex, displayed.

So, to answer your previous question, she says
 yes, there is movement
 there is movement all around it...
 on the peripheries, if you like.

Out of the frame?

In what had come before and what will come after.
 There are pacts and betrayals
 coldhearted tactics and raging instincts,
 hopes and the total abandonment of hope...
 there are the inflating sails of desire and their deflating counterparts
 the twin sails of doubts and of fear.
 Someone will be remembered, even celebrated
 others will be forgotten, scorned into the darkest bend of time.

Is there any sound accompanying the scene?

First a deafening clash of cymbals and beating of drums
in the distance, coming closer.

Then: sudden silence. Throughout the rest of the event
you could hear the heavy breathing of your neighbor.

Is there even a story then?

Genitals almost always imply a story. At least its beginning.

Is there an end to the story?

It might be more of a loop, a repetition, eternal, an endless cycle. The story goes on
proposing and re-proposing itself again and again
ad nauseam.

We would probably leave before it reaches any real conclusion.