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Foreword

The present volume of EMD collects papers presented at the International Medieval Congress at Leeds in July 2018, at the branch meeting of the German/Austrian/Swiss branch of SITM at Wienhausen, 7–9 March 2018, and at the international SITM Congress at Genova, 8–13 July 2019. The volume thus has a double focus: on audience response in medieval drama, and on various ways of interrelation between theatre and ‘objects’—which could be props or relics used or referred to on stage, or the material aspect of books presenting theatrical texts. These ‘objects’ also influence audience response to plays—by waking associations or stirring emotions.

As always, I would like to thank the authors and the peer-reviewers for all the energy and care invested in this volume. And I warmly thank Brepols, namely Guy Carney, for a perfect and patient supervision of this volume.

Cora Dietl, October 2019

'Looking after them, reading in Homer': Thomas Goffe's Turk Plays in Oxford

▼ **ABSTRACT** This article discusses two Turk plays of Thomas Goffe that were performed at Christ Church in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, and subsequently printed: the plays present events from late medieval history, but with extensive classical allusion. The article considers the plays' use of theatrical reference and books as props: these devices may have encouraged a particular response in the academic audiences who first saw these plays, especially influencing their attitude to the Turkish emperors who are fictionalised presentations of historical medieval figures, exotic, religiously and culturally 'other', but also made familiar by their contextualisation among the figures of a classical past, the study of which was the foundation of Tudor education.

▼ **KEYWORDS** Thomas Goffe, Turk plays, *The Raging Turk*, *The Courageous Turk*, *Amurath I*, *Bajazeth II*, Academic theatre, Oxford, early drama, books, props, intertextuality, classics, otherness.

Thomas Goffe wrote two Turk plays while a student at Christ Church, Oxford: *The Raging Turk*, performed at Christ Church between 1613 and 1618, and *The Courageous Turk*, performed at Christ Church on 24th February, 1619. *The Raging Turk* was printed in 1631 as *The Raging Turke, or Baiazet the Second* (STC 11980–1). *The Courageous Turk* appears in manuscript¹ as *The Tragedy of Amurath, Third Tyrant of the Turks*, and then in print (1632) as *The Courageous*

1 Cheshire and Chester Archives, Tabley MS DLT/B 71 fols 1–25.

Elisabeth Dutton is Professor of Medieval English at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and an experienced theatre director who heads the 'Early Drama at Oxford' and 'Medieval Convent Drama' research projects.

Turke, or Amurath the First (STC 11977). Both plays were reprinted, alongside Goffe's *Orestes*, in *Three Excellent Tragedies* (1656). These printed editions are all posthumous, as Goffe died in 1629.²

It is perhaps unsurprising that in recent years scholars have devoted considerable attention to the medieval and early modern representations of adherents to Islam; Goffe's plays, however, are still relatively unstudied. Daniel Vitkus, for example, in *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570–1630*, only mentions *The Raging Turk* for its inclusion of a partnership between a Muslim and a Jew;³ he gives a little more attention to *The Courageous Turk*, but mainly for its imitations of Shakespeare's *Othello*.⁴ The tendency of scholarship to focus on playhouse drama in the age of Shakespeare has perhaps contributed to the relative scholarly neglect of Goffe's work, and to a tendency, when his plays are mentioned, to disregard the significance of their production in a College, not a theatre.⁵ College plays—non-commercial and sometimes big-budget, often written for staging at a particular time and in a specific space, performed by amateurs, produced by and for particular institutions and households, represent important continuities in theatre history that confound divisions between the 'medieval' and the 'early modern' stage.⁶ This paper will consider the significance of the academic audience of Goffe's Turk plays, seventeenth-century presentations of medieval Islamic history.⁷

Matthew Dimmock's *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England*, treats Goffe's Turk plays briefly, arguing that they reflect the ideological investments of their source author, Richard Knolles—and that these are closely aligned to those of the King James I, whose hostility to the Ottoman Turks was outspoken. James's was not a general anti-Islamic stance, since he wrote to congratulate the Shah of Persia on his military success against the Turks, but it marks a significant shift from the attitude of James's predecessor: Elizabeth I, excommunicated from the Catholic world, sought diplomatic and trade relations with the Ottoman Empire. Dimmock argues that whereas plays written under Elizabeth present richly ambiguous, in some ways admiring, portraits of Turks, who were, after all, a thriving example of the prosperous empire to which Elizabethan England could only rhetorically aspire, plays written under James 'replace the ambiguities of these

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- 2 Quotations from the plays will here be by line reference to Goffe, *The Courageous Turk*, ed. by Carnegie. This reprint is based on Meighen's editions of 1631 and 1632.
 - 3 The partnership is between Bajazet and Hamon, an example of a Jewish character who seeks to 'gain by doing the bidding of a powerful Muslim figure ... stage Jews serve as go-betweens or mediators between Muslims and Christians'. Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, p. 183.
 - 4 Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, pp. 99–101.
 - 5 One scholar even writes of *The Raging Turk* that 'the play shows the historical role of the feared villainous sultan on the London stage'. Al-Olaqi, 'Ottoman Familicide', p. 65.
 - 6 See Dutton, 'The Christmas Drama'.
 - 7 There is of course also a growing appreciation of the 'medieval' character of Shakespeare's work, and of his presentation of medieval history: see for example Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World*.

earlier plays with a one-dimensional Ottoman stereotype—the “subverter and sworn enemy of the Christians, and of all that call upon Christ”. Goffe’s plays, according to Dimmock, are ‘bombastic’ and his characters ‘stock’:⁸ his Turks might thus be understood as bearing closer resemblance to medieval infidels than to the admiring portraits of Elizabethan literature.⁹ This paper will suggest that the picture is a little more complicated than Dimmock indicates. Goffe’s two plays are highly literary and theatrical, and a consideration of their foregrounded stagecraft and their insistent intertextuality may enable us to appreciate a little more the qualities that appealed to the original Christ Church audiences of Goffe’s Turks.

The Raging Turk

Goffe’s Turk plays are tragedies loosely based on history: *The Raging Turk* presents events that occurred between 1481 and 1512. The main narrative source was Richard Knolles’ *The General History of the Turks* (1603, reprinted 1610). Bajazeth is a Turkish Emperor with many sons, the youngest of whom, Corcutus, has had himself crowned Emperor as the play begins. He quickly repents and resigns the crown to his father, retiring to an academic life with his father’s promise that he will be heir. Meanwhile Bajazeth’s brother, Zemes, plots with the King of Armenia to take the crown from his brother; the Armenian army however is defeated in battle by another of Bajazeth’s sons, Achmetes. During the battle Zemes and Achmetes fight; Zemes pretends to be mortally wounded, but then flies to Pope Alexander in Rome. Achmetes divorces his wife for adultery, and his father-in-law, Isaac, in revenge tells Bajazeth that Achmetes traitorously allowed Zemes to escape. Bajazeth condemns his son Achmetes to death, but the janissaries force him to reverse the sentence. Bajazeth then proposes war against Rome for harbouring Zemes: two more of his sons oppose the war and Bajazeth has them strangled before stabbing Achmetes himself.

Regretting the murders and tired of ruling, Bajazeth plans to abdicate his throne to his second son, Achomates, but the people declare that they will have no emperor but Bajazeth himself. Meanwhile, another son, Selimus, musters troops with the help of the King of Tartary and plans to attack Bajazeth. In order to secure the succession for Achomates, Bajazeth must arrange for

8 Dimmock, *New Turkes*, p. 201.

9 See, for example, Croxton *Play of the Sacrament*, in which Jonathas and his friends, who are emphatically identified as Jews, nonetheless worship ‘Almighty Mahomet’. As the play’s central concern appears to be the assertion of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, all those who do not share this orthodoxy—Jews, Muslims, and Protestants—are apparently conflated into one general category of ‘infidel’. See the edition of the anonymous play in *Medieval Drama*, ed. by Walker, pp. 212–33; for an excellent analysis of the play and scholarly approaches to it, see Lawton, ‘Sacrilege and Theatricality’, pp. 281–309.

his remaining sons to be killed. The Viceroy of Greece tricks Selimus and Achomates into ambushing each other, and in the ensuing confusion the remaining sons are killed. Bajazeth is visited in his sleep by the ghosts of his victims, and then poisoned by his physician, who is an agent of Selimus. Selimus' son, Suleiman, becomes emperor and plans to attack Christendom.

The play, as we might expect from academic drama, is a self-consciously learned one. For those encountering Goffe's work in print, the 1631 title page emphasises the scholarly credentials of its writer and actors: 'written by Thomas Goffe, Master of Arts, and Student of Christ-Church in *Oxford*, and Acted by the Students of the same house.' The title page then supplies in Latin a Senecan epitaph: 'monstra fato, scelera moribus imputes. Det veniam facile cui venia est opus.' 'The monstrous is attributable to fate, but crime to character',¹⁰ and 'Let him forgive easily, who has need of forgiveness.'¹¹ The first statement problematises the play's repeated assertions of the 'monstrousness' of its characters: for example Selimus refers to his father as a 'horrid monster' (l. 2390), and Bajazeth says of Achomates that he is a 'monster' who has leapt from the earth, 'a most prodigious birth' (ll. 2761–62). If the characters are monsters, or their actions monstrous, does that somehow lay responsibility for their crimes at the door of Fate, rather than their character? And as for forgiveness, it hardly seems to be a theme of the play—even when Bajazeth appears to pardon his sons, he is insincere: he pardons Corcutus and promises to make him heir (ll. 332–37), but has no real intention of doing so; he pardons Selimus only so that he might kill Achomates (ll. 2658–59). We could hardly say that Bajazeth ought to have been more genuinely forgiving: the play's action seems rather to support the code that historically informed the Ottoman Emperors, that close family members are dangerous rivals, and a ruler must put them to death in order to secure his position.¹² It is tempting to see this epitaph as guiding the *reader's* response to the men who will appear in the text, rather than a comment on relationships with the play: it seems to ask the reader to consider his own actions in relation to those of the characters in the play.

In any case, for those encountering the play in performance, this epitaph did not head the production, problematising its ethics or foregrounding its learning. For the audience, academic learning is displayed in the characters' lines; for the characters, their actions are interpreted in the light of the actions of great men recorded in learned histories. For example, Bajazeth's son, Selymus, declares:

10 Seneca, *Phaedra* l. 144, in *Tragedies*, ed. by Fitch, vol. 1, pp. 458–59.

11 Seneca, *Agamemnon*, l. 267, in *Tragedies*, ed. by Fitch, vol. 2., p. 484.

12 Between 1362 and 1512, Murad I, Bayezid I, Mehmed I, Murad II, and Bayezid II all killed their brothers and other rivals to protect their authority. Mehmed II (1444–1446, 1451–1481) effectively codified the Ottoman law of fratricide: Mehmed III (1595–1603) most prolifically killed nineteen brothers after ascending to the throne. See Goffman, 'Negotiating', p. 38. This topic is discussed further below in relation to *The Courageous Turk*.

I seeme like *Romes* great *Caesar*, when opprest
 With *Pompeys* grating malice he led forth
 His noble French-men through the snowy Alpes (ll. 2391–93)

As he is, at the time, justifying his efforts to seize power from his father on the grounds that Bajazeth has become a tyrant, there may be a certain irony to Selymus' identification of himself with Caesar.¹³ Selymus goes on to say that 'Our Irefull Prophet *Mahomet*' (l. 2409) will animate his followers against Bajazeth, to protect 'the order of this wondred Vniuerse' (l. 2413). This Turk looks to the prophet Mohammed, but also portrays a divinity who orders the Universe just as the Christian God does; he deploys the Boethian image of Fortune's wheel, albeit hubristically: 'with this hand I moue The wheele of Fate' (ll. 2689–90). We are used, from medieval drama, to confusions and conflations of religious doctrine and, more specifically, religious heresy to Jews who invoke Mahound, to Muslims who swear by God's wounds:¹⁴ but this is something different—a cultural conflation in which a Turk prince shares with his Christian audience members the referential framework given to them by their education.

This is something different, too, from moments in early theatre when characters are given lines that communicate non-naturalistically, beyond the confines of the character—as for example when Old Testament characters in the Mystery Plays pray to the Trinity, or Shakespearean characters in plays with a pre-Christian setting allude to Christ:¹⁵ we understand that such moments should not be read literally but allusively, and we accept that the playwright has the characters 'speak our language'—just as he has them speak English, rather than Hebrew, or Latin, or Arabic, or Turkish. That this is not what is going on in the classical references of *The Raging Turk* is highlighted in an intradiegetic moment of source-reading. On the night before he dies, Bajazeth takes up Tacitus's *Histories*:

Come, thou man
 Of rare instinct, blest Author of a booke
 Worthy the studies of a reading God,

-
- 13 The figure of Julius Caesar was of course familiar beyond the University, not least from Shakespeare's play (c. 1599). Two Oxford College plays present Caesar, in the year immediately before *The Raging Turk: The tragedie of Caesar and Pompey or Caesar's reuenge* (STC 4339) an anonymous tragedy, was acted at Trinity College and then published in London c. 1606; Jasper Fisher's *Fuimus Troes* was printed in 1633 (STC 10886) but performed at Magdalen sometime around 1613. In both plays Caesar is ruthless and powerful, though in the former he is an avenging Senecan ghost and in the latter a military hero whose campaigns lead to a time of universal peace. See Dutton, 'The Oxford Ghost Walk'.
- 14 Kaplan, *Figuring Racism*, esp. chapter 5, pp. 135–65, explores the medieval theological rationale for Jewish inferiority, that also was to justify servile status for Muslims and Africans.
- 15 See Hamlin's chapter on Shakespeare in *The Blackwell Companion to the Bible in English Literature*, pp. 225–38.

Thou do'st present before my wearied eyes,
Tiberius sweating in his policies,
 Dull *Claudius* gaged by dully flattery,
Nero unbowling Nobility,
Galba vndone by seruants hardly good,
Otho o're-whelm'd in loue, and drencht in blood,
Vitellius sleeping in the chayre of Sate,
Vespasian call'd to gouernment by Fate,
 Still as thy Muse doth trauell o're their age,
 A Princes care is writ in euery Page. (ll. 3354–66)

It is as if Bajazeth is here prompted by a table of contents, picking out and commenting on the names there that stir his memory. The list of Roman history's great and bad is of course a highly effective way of explaining Bajazeth's state of mind: he, like those he lists, is exhausted by the affairs of state, as the list too is perhaps exhausting and overwhelming to him, and to the reader / audience. But the presence of the book—Bajazeth could, after all, simply have listed a few Roman leaders 'extempore'—makes the audience read this scene *naturalistically*, as portraying a Turkish Emperor who reads, learns from, and takes solace in, Tacitus. Blasphemous, barbaric, almost farcically violent as the world of the Raging Turk Bajazeth might sometimes seem, the Emperor reads the same books as his academic audience, is 'one of them'.

Charlotte Scott writes, of books in Shakespeare's plays:

Perhaps the book is a talisman, an icon of faith, a companion for death, or a ledger of life; or even a form of something substantial beyond the precarious order of state and commonwealth, a hopeful reminder of justice and righteousness amidst the conflicts of human behaviour; or simply a mark of education.¹⁶

Bajazeth's volume of Tacitus seems to be all of these things. Firstly, the emperor certainly endows his book with a power like that of a religious icon, or even greater than that, for he says not that it will represent the divine to the faithful but that it will even teach the divine, rewarding the 'studies' of a 'reading God'. Perhaps Bajazeth is blasphemously likening his reading self to a God, but his lines also draw the striking image of a bookish divinity, or literacy as a divine attribute, and thus validate in the most powerful terms the bookish activities to which his University spectators have dedicated themselves. Perhaps Bajazeth also reminds his audience of the property Islam shares with Christianity and Judaism as a religion 'of the book'. Secondly, Bajazeth's Tacitus comforts him on the night before his fatal poisoning—a companion in death—by reminding him of men of the past who, like him, have been burdened by rule; its list is a ledger of lives in which Bajazeth can read his own.

16 Scott, *Shakespeare*, p. 191.

Earlier in the play, Bajazeth seems to pun on the idea that he will himself become a text, in a play that will bear his name, but he is unsure what that name will be. His imperial title, he considers, may prove empty: he imagines it as instead the title of a written work, heading a page of words that lack truth and substance:

Am I not Emperour? men call me so:
A reuerend title, empty attributes,
And a long page of words that follow my name,
But no substantial true prerogative. (ll. 1079–82)

The 'words that follow my name' could then be the account of his life that Bajazeth imagines, paralleling the lives found in Tacitus' *Histories*; at the same time, they could be an image of the men who follow Bajazeth because of his imperial title, but who will fall because that title no longer has real imperial power behind it. This is a description of imperial titles that is also simultaneously a description of a title page of the sort that prefaces Goffe's play. The audience who do not see the title page hear it evoked as a metonymic object that, in Bajazeth's eyes, renders his rule empty and the play that bears his name nothing but 'a long page of words'. The book of Bajazeth, as he imagines it, cannot represent 'something substantial beyond the precarious order of state and commonwealth', for he explicitly denies it substance: by contrast, Tacitus' *Histories*, with their records of the lives of others, has substance indeed, for 'every page' is weighed with the cares of princes. Whether it can also present hope in justice and righteousness is a complicated question. Bajazeth first calls the book his 'chiefest solace' and then, when he believes it holds a prophecy of his death, 'Caedes eo fuit nobilior, quia filius Patrem interfecit', he curses it in terms that reinforce the book's religious power: 'Auant thou damn'd wizard, did thy god *Apollo* teach thee to diuine my fall?' (ll. 3371–72).¹⁷ Perhaps the audience might see justice in Bajazeth's death. Certainly, however, the book is a mark of Bajazeth's education, an education that explicitly links his world to that of his educated audience.

That Bajazeth does, in fact, become the eponymous hero of a play called *The Raging Turk* is then intriguing, for, as Linda MacJannet has discussed, 'raging' was the epithet for a particular type of stage figure who could be either a tyrant—Herod is here the archetype, from the Mystery plays to *Hamlet*¹⁸—or a tragic hero. In this latter case, 'rage was linked with capaciousness and nobility of spirit', and the exemplar was the eponymous hero of Seneca's *Hercules Furens*, who, while committing many violent acts such as throwing the innocent messenger Lichas into the sea, and tearing his own flesh, nonetheless evokes sympathy as

17 In Meighen's edition of the play, the quotation is attributed to Tacitus, *Histories*, book 20. In modern editions of Tacitus, the quotation appears as 'Eo notabilior caedes fuit, quia filius patrem interfecit'. ('The carnage was particularly marked by the fact that in it a son killed his own father'). Tacitus, *The Histories*, ed. by Moore, vol. 1, III, xxv, pp. 372–73.

18 Hamlet famously says of an over-bombastic playing style that 'It out-Herods Herod': Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. by Thompson and Taylor, III. 2. 14.

‘a great-souled man ensnared in a web of deception and revenge.’¹⁹ Bajazeth says of himself that he ‘play’d a raging Hercules’ (l. 1487)—he wishes to align himself with the latter, more flattering and also more learned, less popular, reference. Again, Bajazeth’s frame of reference is that of a bookman. All of this must surely have affected the response of the Christ Church men who watched Goffe’s play to his proud, violent and deceitful protagonist. They could disapprove of his actions, perhaps, but not simply distance themselves from him as ‘other’.

That Bajazeth imagines himself not just as a title page but also as an actor is significant, for the actor bears an intriguing relation to the book. As Julie Stone Peters notes, ‘Actors could be “volumes” appearing larger than life in “larger print”’.²⁰ The actor must read his text but then also write it large for his audience to read, written on his body: he must read and be read. Scott considers that the presence of a material book on stage may ask us to consider the inter-relations of actor, stage and volume. She discusses, for example, the mutilated, silenced Lavinia of *Titus Andronicus* in relation to the book of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* that her nephew carries: her body, represented by the actor’s body, is a book that her family must learn to read, even as she reads and then ‘speaks’ through Ovid’s tale of *Philomel* made physically present in an onstage volume. The book, Scott claims, teaches us how to ‘interpret the space, learned or improvised, between the body and the mind’.²¹ Bajazeth, however, cannot let his role stand: he does not leave a space for interpretation but rather exposes the motivation of the actor’s mind and thus belies the role played by his body: he explains that he ‘neatly put on A passionate humour’ not because he was himself ensnared, but, after Achmetes’ death, to ‘please My friends’ (ll. 1486–87) and to ‘shut up the Scene’ (l. 1488). He teaches us to ‘read’ him sceptically.

The book, of course, is an image of perpetuity; books preserve memory, and deeds that are recorded in books live on, just as the writers who create the books live on, in a monument ‘aere perennius’ (‘more lasting than bronze’):²² as the poet Geoffrey Whitney puts it, ‘Scripta manent’, and ‘Writing lasts when all other monuments decay in time’.²³ The opposite, forgetting, is also essential to *The Raging Turk*, and is figured as a heavy cloak that hides things from memory. So Bajazeth, when usurped by Corcutus, personifies ‘black night’ as throwing a ‘sable mantle ore the heauens’ to hide him from the shame (ll. 154–56); attacked by another son, Selimus, he later apostrophises:

Maske vp thy brightnesse *Phaebus*, louely night,
Hurl thy thick mantle ouer all the heauens
Let this black day for euer be forgot (ll. 2833–35)

19 McJannet, *The Sultan Speaks*, p. 19.

20 Peters, *Theatre of the Book*, p. 109.

21 Scott, *Shakespeare*, p. 37. Scott’s discussion of Lavinia occupies chapter 2, pp. 26–56.

22 Horace, *Odes*, 3, 30, l. 1, pp. 216–17.

23 Diehl, *An Index of Icons*, p. 33. Whitney’s emblem presents a ruined building and a pile of books on a table on which is carved ‘Scripta manent’.

These images of night as a black cloak, darkness as hiding or forgetting, are perhaps conventional enough, but what is extraordinary in this play is the dramatic power given to the image when it is embodied as a rather exotic theatrical prop. When Bajazeth wishes to kill Achmetes, but fears he has no rightful cause, Isaac reminds him of a custom of the Turks, 'Not vs'd of late, yet firme still in effect' (l. 796), that if the Emperor hates a man but 'in strickt seueritie of right Cannot proceed against him' (ll. 799–800), then he can

Orewhelme him in a robe of mourning blacke,
Which we haue cal'd deaths mantle, that thing done,
The man thus us'd is forfeited to fate,
And a deuoted sacrifice to him
Whome he had er'st offended, neither can
Strength or intreatie, wrest him from his death
Both which are treason, and inexecutable. (ll. 801–07)

The black robe does not, of course, actually kill a man—it is only figuratively 'death's mantle'—but the figure is an efficacious one nonetheless, for it enacts a change in the status of the man wearing it, rendering him as if dead to those around him, and in particular to the Emperor who cannot listen to pleas for mercy. The man in the black cloak is a dead man walking; the black cloak negates him as if he is already forgotten.

It is therefore ironic that Bajazeth, preparing to put the cloak on Achmetes, declares that he is protecting Achmetes' fame from a future in which it might be tarnished by 'enuious chance' (l. 1019): only the reputations of the dead are safe. 'Death is an immortal gift, we thus bestow' (l. 1021), Bajazeth declares, as 'He casts a gowne of blacke veluet upon him, called the mantle of death' (l. 1022). The stage direction presumably aims to clarify the connection between Bajazeth's action here and his earlier plotting with Isaac, but Isaac describes the general nomination, by tradition, of a prop as it fulfils a particular function in a particular ceremony, whereas the stage direction seems to imply that there is an actual black velvet gown that is actually and always 'the mantle of death', because calling it so can make it so. The stage direction comically literalises what is figurative in Isaac's speech.

This comedy is then extended in the foolish superstition of the janissaries' reaction to 'death's mantle'. The janissaries insist that Bajazeth 'set Achmetes free' by removing the cloak from him, but of course the cloak cannot really inhibit Achmetes' freedom unless the symbolism with which tradition has imbued it is fully honoured; and conversely, if the janissaries can insist that Bajazeth remove the cloak from Achmetes then it has clearly not enacted the irreversible doom that Isaac claimed it signified. Perhaps this is a misjudged scene on Goffe's part. Or perhaps it is designed to expose the traditions of the Turks as foolish superstition. More interestingly, however, it seems a moment in which Goffe is playing with the distinction between theatrical props, in which we know not to believe, but the fictions of which we accept, and the cultural functioning of metonymic objects within traditions, Christian

or Turk. If Bajazeth is a stock character of the violent Turk, a bombastic alien infidel, he is nonetheless presented in a play that is richly aware of the traditions, both literary and theatrical, that will inform its reception, among its educated, Christian audience members and readers alike. That Bajazeth seems metatheatrically aware of his own audience's—or readers'—expectations enables him also to participate in their cultural world at the same time as representing their feared and derided 'other'.

The Courageous Turk has been more fully discussed than *The Raging Turk*, probably appealing to scholars because of its richer range of philosophical and ethical questions, and its similarities to Shakespeare's *Othello*. It dramatizes events that took place between 1359 and 1389. The main narrative source was again Knolles' *The General History of the Turks*; in *The Courageous Turk* Goffe also draws narrative from Seneca's *Thebais* and there are verbal echoes both classical and contemporary—Martin Wiggins lists Homer's *Iliad*, Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Shakespeare's *Richard III*.²⁴ Amurath the Turk has subdued Greece but is distracted from his military campaigns by a Greek concubine, Eumorphe, whom he marries. At his request, his tutor, Lala-Schahin, prepares a wedding masque about the loves of the gods, but Lala-Schahin, keen to turn Amurath's thoughts back to conquest, adds a further masque in which Fame praises military heroes. Amurath becomes melancholy about the conflicting demands upon him; Lala-Schahin dresses as the ghost of Amurath's father and visits his wedding bed, rebuking his neglect of empire. Amurath beheads his sleeping wife and renews his plans to attack Europe. In the second part of the play, Amurath wages war successfully against Christian armies that are internally divided, and suppresses a rebellion by his son-in-law, Aladin, whom he then pardons and puts in charge of a wing of the army marching on Kosovo. Portents foretell Amurath's death, but, encouraged by Schahin, Amurath fights anyway and the Turks are victorious; however, Amurath intends to be merciful to the Christian general Kobelitz, but is stabbed to death by him. Bajazeth becomes king and strangles his brother to forestall sedition.

Violence in the play is ethically complicated. To consider first Bajazeth's killing of his brother: Amurath's tutor, Lala Schahin, urges this murder on Bajazeth in accordance with 'Turkish Lawes' (l. 1895) arguing that there should not be two suns in one hemisphere (l. 1886–87) and that 'One body by one soule must be inform'd' (l. 1889). The metaphor likens the country to a body, but then suggests not that the ruler's body may be identified with that body, but rather that the ruler is the nation's soul. As in *The Raging Turk*, Julius Caesar is invoked as a historical pattern justifying an action otherwise at best dubious: Amurath's empire, like Rome, 'was nere secure / Whilst she contain'd a *Pompey*, and a *Caesar*' (ll. 1891–92)—though Caesar did not personally order Pompey's murder, his position was secured by the murder of his rival, and Lala Schahin argues that Amurath should therefore

24 Wiggins and others, *British Drama*, vol. VII, p. 154.

kill the brother who is his rival. As Joel Elliot Slotkin notes, 'neither their arguments nor Baiazet's reluctant acquiescence displays the supposedly natural bloodthirstiness of the stereotypical Turk':²⁵ Goffe's emphasis on the Turkish custom displays an attitude different to that of his source, Knolles, for whom this episode was the beginning of an 'vnnatural and inhumane costume, euer since holden for a most wholesome and good policie amongst the Turkish kings and emperours'.²⁶ Slotkin writes: 'What Knolles calls an effect of the killing, Goffe depicts as its cause':²⁷ that he even justifies it with reference to the iconic Roman leaders, Julius Caesar and Pompey, renders it familiar, rather than exotic, to the Oxford scholars steeped in Roman history and Caesar's own writings.

It is certainly difficult to read this play's protagonist as a one-dimensional stock Turk. Amurath seems to consider his 'Turk' identity as something he can choose to adopt at appropriate moments: as he enters battle with Cobelitz, for example, he declares 'now will I be a *Turke*' (l. 775). Interestingly, this does not mean simply that he will be violent and bloody; rather, Amurath at this point pledges that he will fight to subdue others to the 'yoke' of the Prophet (l. 776)—that is to say, to Islam. We can thus see war as a religious obligation in Amurath's eyes, and as something he must embrace when he embraces his role of 'Turk'. This casts important light on the moments at which Amurath seems in danger of forgetting war while under the influence of love: luxurious sexual pleasure, it is implied, is in opposition to the identity of the Turk, and for all the similarities between *The Raging Turk* and *Othello*, here to be 'Turk' is to be devoutly violent, not lascivious.²⁸ The conflict between the claims of love and war is of course a familiar theme of classical texts—Aeneas and Mark Anthony being perhaps the most obvious sufferers from it²⁹—and war is the choice that classical literature often advocates, as witnessed by Hector, Achilles, and Alexander the Great in the masque in praise of military heroes. Classical heroes once more signal validation of the violent action of the Turkish emperor. Surely the Oxford men in Goffe's audience would again have been drawn to Amurath's court as a place with which they shared cultural reference.

However, Amurath's choice of war above love leads first to his horrifically violent killing of his wife. If *The Raging Turk* echoes Shakespeare in places, *The Courageous Turk* seems to embrace Shakespeare in large chunks, most notably in the *Othello*-influenced scene in which Eumorphe prepares herself

25 Slotkin, 'Now will I be a *Turke*', p. 231.

26 Knolles, *The generall historie*, p. 201.

27 Slotkin, 'Now will I be a *Turke*', p. 231.

28 Characters in *Othello* make repeated reference to the racial stereotype of the lecherous black man: to give just a few examples, Othello is a 'lascivious Moor' (I.i, 126), 'an old black ram, tugging your white ewe' (I.i, 90–91), and a 'barbary horse' (I.i, 112). See Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by Honigsmann.

29 The predicament of Aeneas had been dramatised at Christ Church some years before Goffe's *Courageous Turk*, in William Gager's play, *Dido*, staged 1583.

for sleep while talking to her attendant Morphe about marriage, and then sings a song, before being murdered in her bed by her husband. That Shakespeare merely has Othello smother Desdemona makes life much easier for his stage manager; Goffe requires that Eumorphes be decapitated onstage.³⁰ The scene is carefully prepared: Amurath stands with his Captains round Eumorphe's bed and challenges them to resist her, but they each declare that, were she their wife, they would entirely succumb to her peerless charms. Amurath can out-do them: he declares that the valour in his arm will 'cut off troops of thoughts', that his mind will not be 'wrought by any fashion', and that if

all the heads of that inticing Sexe
 Were upon hers, thus then should one full stroake
 Mow them all off.
Here Amurath cuts off Eumorphes head, shewes it to the Nobles
 (ll. 709–11)

Amurath then urges the Captains to kiss her, declaring in wonder that this face once captivated him, that her eyes are now exposed as 'lying mirrors' because they seemed to promise happiness. Amurath's insight, of course, is that however beautiful a human body when whole and living, it is repulsive when severed into parts. But it is also a comment on the prosthetic head, the prop, that is indeed a 'lie', only standing in for the actor's head that itself stood in for Eumorphe. And it is a lie that, in some ways, Amurath has created for himself out of his love.

The clear references to Othello's murder of Desdemona encourage the audience to read Amurath's killing of Eumorphe as a domestic crime rather than a military feat, for all Amurath's protestations. Amurath's lie is made all the more absurd two scenes later, when his Captains return from battle '*and each of them presents to Amurath, the head of a dead Christian*' (779–81). The Captains appear not as military heroes but as pathetic imitators of the Emperor they are trying to impress, and now there are just too many heads on the stage. The visual connection that is drawn between Amurath's killing of his wife and the killing in battle of the Christians also exposes the lack of heroism in Amurath's actions: while he might dress his actions up as self-disciplined, noble sacrifice, what he actually did was slaughter a defenceless, sleeping woman. If the Oxford men in Goffe's audience had recognised their cultural participation in, for example, pious Aeneas's struggle to give up Dido, then Goffe's astute sense of stagecraft here forces them to recognise their horrid

³⁰ In Goffe's source, Knolles's *General historie*, it is not Amurath but Mahomet II who beheads his beloved wife, Irene. The story had, before Goffe's play, been the subject of a lost play by George Peele entitled *The Turkish Mahomet and Hiren the fair Greek* (c. 1594) and of a poem by William Barksted, *Hiren: or The faire Greeke* (1611). After Goffe, the story was retold in Lodowick Carlell's play *Osmond the great Turk*, published in 1657. See *Christian-Muslim Relations*, ed. by Thomas, p. 227. See Chew, *The Crescent*, pp. 479–90 for an account of the Irene legend.

complicity too in a violence of which they become the target, but which is always as familiar as it is other.

In the masque in praise of war, once again a book features as a prop, and Goffe's treatment of that book as containing a specific text moves away from the symbolic functioning we might expect of masque's allegory. The Ghosts of Hector and Achilles enter and '*to them Alexander the great stands gazing on them, whilst Fame speaks from aloft*' (ll. 268–70): Fame explains that the Gods 'awakt me' from sleepe to bring ink to 'old Homers' pen, 'Werewith he curiously hath lin'd your names ... And made them live to all posterity' (ll. 277–82). The ghosts of Hector and Achilles then exit, but the ghost of Alexander remains, '*looking after them, reading in Homer*' (ll. 285–86). Of course, spectators, as opposed to readers, cannot immediately know that it is Homer that Alexander reads, unless they are close enough to read lettering on the volume. But Goffe has his ghostly character cite in Greek the opening lines of the *Iliad*, 'The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus' son, Achilles.' Alexander's ghost offers no translation, but the lines would have been instantly resonant for Goffe's academic audience, who would then recall the violent images that ensue of the destructive power of Achilles' vengeful anger.³¹ Alexander, however, supplies instead lines of unreserved praise for Achilles, who is 'most fortunate' (l. 288), who is worthy 'Trophies of renowne' (l. 289), and whose glorious fame Homer has made 'a never dying story' (l. 292). Instead of the violent destruction that is the content of Homer's narration, Alexander draws attention to the artistic creation in which Homer orders that content, the illustrious work of art contained in the book that he carries. The creative process by which men's lives are turned into texts is highlighted by the stage directions that require that Achilles' Ghost exit, and only then that Alexander, who had gazed on him, turn to read about him in a book.

As Jonathan Culler writes:

intertextuality is less a name for a work's relation to particular prior texts than an assertion of a work's participation in a discursive space and its relation to the codes which are potential formalisations of that space.³²

The book of Homer seems to formalise the space of Lala-Schahin's masque as a text, one that forces out the figures, or the ghosts of the figures, whose actions have been recorded in that text. Allegorical drama presents books as metonyms—for example, the New Testament that Evangelium carries 'as a sign' (*pro signo*, 134) in John Bale's *Three Laws*,³³ or the 'boke of counte' (l. 104) that Everyman must take to his grave and that represents the reckoning of

31 'The wrath sing, goddess, of Peleus' son Achilles, the accursed wrath which brought countless sorrows upon the Achaeans, and sent down to Hades many valiant souls of warriors, and made the men themselves to be the spoil for dogs and birds of every kind'. Homer, *Iliad*, book 1, ll. 1–5, ed. by Murray, p. 13.

32 Cited by Brown, *Redefining Elizabethan Literature*, p. 36.

33 See the edition in *Medieval Drama*, ed. by Walker, pp. 492–533, p. 496.

his life's deeds,³⁴ and here, in a masque, we may expect something similar from Goffe. But instead he draws attention to a very specific text, much more like Shakespeare's Lavinia with her *Metamorphoses*. The precise nature of the relationship between Homer's *Iliad* and Lala-Schahin's masque is as yet uncertain; what the truncated quotation about Achilles' rage will articulate in the discursive space of Goffe's play is at this moment far from clear. But destruction has been made the precondition for fame, and violent wrath seems the noblest end, even when the motive is unclear: the gods, Alexander explains, are most pleased to see a soldier who 'strong with his wounds' nonetheless displays 'noble wrath' (ll. 318–23).

The Masque has a profound effect on Amurath, whose response presents an intriguing challenge to the reader and to the actor. The stage direction details: 'Amurath *seemes troubled yet collecting himselefe, dissembles his Passion, speakes ...*' (ll. 367–88). For the reader encountering this play in print, what does it mean that Amurath 'seems' troubled, rather than simply 'being' troubled? Where we might expect access to the character's state of mind, we are held at a distance, only able to read appearances; the reader must create mentally the actor whose expression can then be read. Where an actual actor performs the role, he may choose briefly to present Amurath's passion and then not to, so that the audience will read the character as hiding his feelings: the stage direction's movement in and out of the theatrical reality retains its curiosity, however, for while the 'trouble' is only 'seeming', performative, the 'collecting himself' appears to describe Amurath's actual response, within the fictional world of the play, and it leads to a further level of performance, but one that is in fact a non-performance, the hiding of passion.

Like Caesar, and like Bajazeth, Amurath is an actor, and one who is skilled at feigning passion as well as hiding it. As he faces death, Amurath declares that he ought to perform a passionate desire for death in order to please his audience:

Sure I am but an actor, and must strive
To personate the Tragicke ends of Kings.³⁵
And so (to winne applause unto the Scaene)
With fained passion thus must graspe at death! (ll. 1850–53)

Whereas Tacitus' histories of rulers brought comfort to Bajazeth as he approached death, since they offered examples of others who had suffered a prince's cares, Amurath experiences intolerable pressure as he considers

³⁴ See the edition in *Medieval Drama*, ed. Walker, pp. 281–97, p. 283.

³⁵ The tragic ends of kings seem to imply a medieval, *de casibus*, model of tragedy as stemming from the turning of Fortune's wheel, as opposed to the classical idea of tragedy as a product of an individual's *hamartia*. See Cooper, *Shakespeare*, pp. 139–69. Amurath's lines perhaps echo those of Shakespeare's medieval king, Richard II, as he urges the retelling of examples of kingly mortality: 'For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground | And tell sad stories of the death of kings ...' see Shakespeare, *Richard II*, ed. by Forker, III.2.

examples of kingly deaths on the tragic stage. First, he has to recognise that neither as a king nor as a Turk does he have any power to evade death: his soul will not 'stay' when commanded by 'a King, a Turke' (l. 1849). This recognition forces Amurath to acknowledge that he is only an actor, can only feign passion and can only impersonate the deaths of kings—but strangely, he does not seem to consider that he might be able not to perform death. He has apparently no choice but to present a mortal man, but his death scene inevitably disappoints, partly because he has explained away the fiction of his performance and revealed himself an actor, and partly because his stage does not oblige him with any special effects. 'Not one Earthquake? One blazing Comet / T' accompany my soule t'his Funerall?' (ll. 1857–58), he asks. His hubris is absurd, but perhaps his dramatic sense is sound: a life of such extreme melodrama does appear to demand a death accompanied by some powerful stage phenomenon.

The scene tips from absurd to chilling as Amurath realises that, in the absence of comets, his rhetoric can still hold performative power: he cannot avoid death, but he can send his soul to sink 'beneath the Thracian Mount' (l. 1865) and threaten that even from the grave he will be still 'the Christians foe' (l. 1869). Finally, the dying Amurath declares: "'tis I that come A *Turke*, a Tyrant, and a Conqueror' (ll. 1872–73). He is no longer an actor considering how to impersonate a tragic death; he is no longer able to put on or take off roles as seems earlier to have been the case. As he dies, his 'I' is entirely equated with the definition of his role—Turk, tyrant, conqueror.

Given the play's use of theatrical tropes and particularly its focus on the emperor as actor, it is pleasingly appropriate that we have a historical record of the vicissitudes of the actor who played Amurath—apparently Goffe himself. Appended to the Tabley manuscript of *The Courageous Turk* is a poem by Goffe,³⁶ an 'elegy' to hoarseness occasioned by a sudden cold that afflicted the 'representer of Amurath' when he was about to act.³⁷ The poet laments that hoarseness does not prevent lawyers pleading corrupt cases, or witches casting wicked spells, or puritans preaching over-long sermons; but when men who 'best know how to speak' instead preserve 'judicious silence' in order to hear a 'dead poem' (p. 435, ll. 25–27), hoarseness silences the agent that should deliver words to them. Of course, it is possible that this little poem describes a situation partly or wholly fictional, but it offers an interesting compliment to the ideal audience it imagines for Goffe's play—those who are rhetorically gifted but know how to listen as well as to speak. This is presumably Goffe's characterisation of the ideal Oxford men. That they are ready to listen to a 'dead poem' is intriguing: is the play a 'dead poem' because it narrates medieval histories, and its protagonists are dead? Perhaps Goffe implies simply that his play is 'dead' until it is animated by actors. In both of his Turk plays, Goffe

36 Cheshire and Chester Archives, Tabley MS DLT/B 71, fols 24–25.

37 This poem is edited in REED *Oxford* pp. 343–46, and line references here are to this edition.

uses theatrical reference, and books as props, to influence the responses of the educated Oxford men who are his audience. He compliments them on their book-learning, but at the same time challenges them to see his raging and courageous medieval Turks as in many ways men like them.

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