“A[u]gmenter of Their Kingdome”:
Goffe’s The Couragious Turke, or, Amurath the First as a Christian Tragedy based on Knolles’ The Generall Historie of the Turkes

Knolles’un The Generall Historie of the Turkes
Başlıklı Eseri Işığında Goffe’ın The Couragious Turke, or, Amurath the First Adlı Hıristiyan Tragedyası

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Abstract
Since Turkish Sultans mainly represented Islam for playwrights and the audience, English Renaissance plays about the Turkish Sultans were predominantly Christian tragedies illustrating the superiority of Christianity over ‘Mohammedanism’. The earliest Ottoman sultan to appear in such a tragedy is Sultan Murad I, or Amurath I (1362-1389) in Thomas Goffe’s tragedy entitled The Couragious Turk, or Amurath the First. In this respect, Goffe’s Amurath the First contains a great density of biblical allusions, where Amurath functions as an anti-type in comparison to his Christian counterparts, Eumurphe and Cobelitz. As many playwrights before him, Goffe gathered the material from Richard Knolles’ The Generall Historie of the Turkes (1603). The aim of this study is to provide a detailed study of Goffe’s Christian tragedy in the light of Knolles’ aforementioned text.

Keywords: Goffe, Knolles, Murad I/Amurath I, Mehmed II/Mahomet II, Battle of Kosovo

Özet
İngiliz Rönesans döneminde Türkleri konu alan birçok Hıristiyan tragedyası mevcuttur. Bunların çoğunluğu Osmanlı Sultanlarını konu almaktadır. Sahneye taşınan en erken Osmanlı Sultanı Thomas Goffe’nin The Couragious Turke, or, Amurath the First (Cesur Türk veya Birinci Murad) adlı tiyatro eserindeki I. Murad’dir. Kendisinden önceki birçok yazar gibi, Goffe kaynak olarak Richard Knolles’un The Generall Historie of the Turkes (Türklerin Genel Taribi) adlı eserini kullanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı,

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English playwrights of the Renaissance wrote numerous Christian tragedies, mirroring the Christian concept of the world and illustrating the superiority and triumph of Christianity over ‘Mohammedanism’. Most of these plays dealt with, or were inspired by the life of Ottoman sultans reigning between 1360 and 1603. The earliest sultan to appear in such a tragedy is Sultan Murat I or Amurath I in Thomas Goffe’s *The Couragious Turk, or Amurath the First* (1632). Unfortunately, it has been fairly neglected, apart from general references in connection to the representation of the Ottoman Turks, and studies such as Burian’s paper on Goffe’s general use of Knolles’ chronicle as a source for his Turkish plays and Slotkin’s paper dealing with “the importance of socially constructed identities in determining behavior and maintaining the imperial polity” (231), etc. This neglect might be due to the fact that it was most probably never presented of the public stage, being viewed as a direct reflection of Knolles’ history, and because it is not considered a great play. In fact, according to Orhan Burian:

1 Although the latest Ottoman personage to be dramatized is Mustafa, Sultan Süleyman’s son, in Fulke Greville’s *Mustapha* (1608), it seems that playwrights made use of material dealing with Sultans up to Mehmé III (Mahomet III), that is 1603. The fact that Mahomet III had caused nineteen of his brothers to be put to death, “shocked” Europe, but also provided material for certain plays.


7 Even though it had been performed by the students of Christ Church in 1618/19 “[…] so far as it is known they [Couragious Turk and The Raging Turk] were never presented on the public stage”. Samuel Chew, *Crescent and the Rose*, New York: Octagon Books. Inc.,1965. p.486.
None of the plays [about the Turks], with the possible exception of Tamburlaine, counts among the great plays of the age. Yet, as evidences of the kaleidoscopic picture that existed in the Elizabethan mind with regard to the east and especially to Turkey, their significance is undeniable, and does compensate considerably for what they lack as creative works.

With respect to Goffe’s play, the “kaleidoscopic picture” it represents is the false images traditionally associated with the Turks, the common enemy of Christians, such as their ‘evilness’, ‘treachery’ and ‘lust’, etc. combined with information and narrations presented by Richard Knolles. As many playwrights before him, Goffe gathered the material for his play from a very popular chronicle concerning the Ottoman Turks, Knolles’ The Generall Historie of the Turkes (1603). The chronicle was first published in 1603, and reprinted with additional information in 1610, 1621, 1631, 1638, 1679, 1687-1700 (in three volumes) and 1701 (abridged). Since the play was first performed in by the students of Christ Church in 1618/9, Goffe could have used the 1603 original, or the 1610 edition. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine Goffe’s play in the light what appears to be his only historical source. But as Goffe has indicated in the prologue, he does not follow the chronicle chronologically “We will not ope the booke to you, and fhow/A ftory word by word, as it doth goe,/But give invention leave to undertake,” (20-3) but instead has combined bits and pieces from the life of two sultans, “Mohamet” and “Amurath” together with additional scenes such as masques, the use of Senecan elements such Lala Schahin being disguised as the ghost of Amurath’s father and the demons that appear at the Battle of Kosovo and innovations, etc.

The general outline of Couragious Turk, or Amurath the First is presented in the “Argument”. The first two acts of the play deal with Amurath’s obsession with Eumurphe, a Christian concubine, who conquers Amurath: “A Suppos’d [Supposed] Victory by Amvrath [Amurath=Murad=Murat]/Obtain’d in...
Greece, where many captives tane [taken?], One among the rest [rest], IRENE [“Eumurphe” in play], conquers him;” (1-3). According to Goffe, Amurath’s martial conquest is not actually a success, because he has been conquered by the Christian lady. Consequently, he loses his interest in war, which leads to rumours and hostility among the nobility and soldiers: “For taken with her love, he sounds [sounds] retreat, /Eternally from War [War]; but after, mov’d/With murmurs of his Nobles” (4-6). As a result, Amurath strikes off Eumurphe’s head in the presence of the nobles and returns to his former self: “in her Bed/Before his Counsellors face, strikes [strikes] off her head./Then ruinating former bloody broyles,” (6-8). Thus, concluding the legend. The subject of the rest of the play (Act III-V) mainly dealing with the Battle of Kosovo and Amurath’s death, is as follows:

He straight [straight] overcomes [overcomes] all Christian Provinces,
Invades the Confinnes of his Sonne in Law
Fires Caramania, and makes Aladin
With’s Wife and Children supplicant for their lives;
At length appointed his greatest Field to fight,
Vpon [Upon] Ca∫∫anae’s Plaines, where having got
A wondrous Conquest [conquest] against [against] the Christians [Christians],
Comes the next morne [morning] to overview the dead,
Amongst [Amongst] whom a Christian Captaine Cobelitz,
Lying wounded there, at fight of Amurath,
Rising and staggering towards him, desperately
With a short dagger wounds him to the heart,
And then immediately the Christian dies.
The Turke expiring, Bajazet his Heire [Heir]
Strangles his younger brother; Thus still springs
The Tragic sport which Fortune makes with Kings.

(Argument, 9-27)

Goffe has used two parts of Knolles’ chronicle: the section on Sultan Mehmet II entitled “The Life of Mahomet, Second of that Name, Seventh King and First Emperor of the Turks, for His Many Victories Surnamed [Surnamed] the Great” for for Amurath’s relationship with Eumurphe, and the part entitled “The Life of Amurath, the First of that name, and the Great Augmenter of their Kingdom” for the rest of the play, with the exception of the last hundred lines concerning Bajazet’s strangling of Jacub.
In order to find parallelisms between the play and chronicle, it might be best to begin with the legend of Mohamet [Sultan Mehmed II] and Hyrene as presented in Knolles’ chronicle:

Now among many faire virgins taken prisoner by the Turkes at the winning of Constantinople, was one Irene a Greeke borne, of such incomparable beautie & rare perfection, both of bodie & mind, as if nature had in her, to the admiration of the world, laboured to have shewn her great skil; so prodigally he bestowed upon her, all the graces that might beautifie or command that her curious a worke. This paragon was by him that chance had taken her, presented unto the great Sultan Mohamet himselfe, as a jewel fit for no mans wearing as his owne: [...] Neuertheless, having as then his head full of troubles, and above all things carefull for the affurings of the imperiallye citie of Constantinople, by him but even then won, be for the present committed her to the charge of his Eunuch, [...] But thee his troubles overblowne, & his new conquests well assured, he then began forthwith to thinke of the faire Irene: and for his pleasure seeking for her, took in her perfections such delight and contentment, as that in short time he had changed state with her, she being become the mistress & commander of him so great a conqueror: & he in nothing more delighted, than in doing her the greatest honor & service he could. All the day be spent with her in discourse, and the night in dalliance; at time spent in her company, seemed to him short & without her nothing pleased:

(Knolles, 1631: 350)14

Irene, as a Christian, is presented as a paragon, an image of perfection in body and mind. Conquered by her ‘superior’ qualities, Mohamet (Mehmed II) spends so much time with her that he is ‘tamed’ and loses his interest in war:

[...] his fierce nature was now by her well tamed and his wonted care of arms quite neglected: Mars slept in Venus lap, and now the soldiers might go play. Yea the very government of his estate and empire seemed to be of him, in comparison of her, little or not at all regarded; the care thereof being by him carelessly committed to others, that for he might wholly himself attend upon her, in whom more than in himself the people said he delighted. Such is the power of disordered affections, where reason not the rein. (350)

His infatuation with her, lasting almost two years, causes discontentment in his subjects and nobility:

But while he thus forgetful of himself, spends in pleasure not some few days or months, but even one whole yere or two, to the lighting of his credit, & the great discontentment of his subjects in general: the Iantzaries & other soldiers of the court men de juroes of implauint, & grieved to see him so given to his affections, & to make no end thereof began at first in secret to murmur thereat, & to speak hardly of him; and at length after their in solent manner pared

14 All the quotations from Richard Knolles’ The Generall Historie of the Turke, London: Adam Islip, 1603; reprinted 1631.
not openly to say, That it were well done to deprive [deprive] him of his government and state, as unworthy thereof, and to set up [set up] one of his former in his stead. Which speeches were now grown to rise and the discontentment of the men of war so great, than it was not without cause by some of the great Baftas feared, whereunto this their so great insolence would grow. (350-1)

In the end, Mustapha Pasha, “a man for his good service (for that he was a child brought up with him) of Mahomet greatly fauoured,” speaks with Mehmed II regarding the discontentment of the soldiers and nobles:

The life you have lateled ever since the taking of Constantinople, as a man careless of his estate, and wholly wedded unto his own pleasure, hath given occasion not unto the vulgar people only (always ready to say the worst) and soldiers of the Court, the guarders of your person, but even unto the greatest commanders of your armies and empire, to murmur and grudge. (351)

Then he criticizes him for being controlled by a poor common slave:

You have given your selfe over (as they say) for a poyle and prey unto a poore simple woman, your slave and vaflale, who with her beautie and allurements hath so bewitched your understanding and reason, as that you can attend nothing but her service, and the satisfying of your most passion and inordinate desires; which how much the more you cherish them, so much the more they torment and vex you. (351)

He implores him to consider his current transformation: “Enter but a little unto your selfe (I pray you) and compare the life you now lead with the like time heretofore you spent in treading honours steps, and you shall find a notable difference betwixt the one and the other.” (351), reminds him of all the great achievements of the former sultans, and concludes that he should not be controlled by a slave: “Thinke that your greatest conquest, and suffer not your selfe, so great a conqueror, to be led in triumph by your slave.” (352).

Amurath is so much affected by his words that soon after he appears in front of his noble with Hyrene “who beside her incomparable beautie and other the greatest graces of nature, adorned also with all that curiositie could devise, seemed not now to the beholders a mortal wight, but some of the fattely goddes, whom Poets in their expressions describe.” (353) And this is what Mohamet says to them: “I understand of your great discontentment & that you all murmur & grudge, for that I, overcome with mine affections toward this so faire a paragon, cannot withdraw my selfe [myself] from her presence;”, asking them what they would do if they were in “possesion a thing so rare and precious, so lovely and so faire” (353). But they, enchanted by her beauty, say that they could not find fault in his manner. Then, in order to prove that they have been mistaken about him says: “Well, but now I will make you understand how far you have bin deceived in me & that there is no earthly thing that can so much blind my fenes, or bereave [brave?] […] yea I would you should all know, that the honor & conquests of the Othoman Kings my noble progenitors, is so fixed in my breast, with such a desire in my selfe to exceed the same, as that nothing but
death is able to put it out of my remembrance.” and suddenly “with one of his hands catching the faire Greeke by the haire of the head, and drawing his falchion with the other, at one blow truck off her head, to the great terror of them all” (353)

The play does not show Eumorphe’s [based on Hyrene] capture, but begins with Amurath coming on stage and declaring that he has lost his interest in war thanks to his new acquired saint, Eumorphe:

Amurath: […] Peace (our grand) Captaine, see here Amurath,
That would have once confronted Mars himselfe, […]
Puts off ambitious burdens, and doth hate
Through bloody Rivers to make passages,
Whereby his Soul might flote to Acheron,
[…]
Iove I will outbrave thee! Melt thy self in Lust
Embrace at once all star-made Concubines,
[…]
To make me happier, here I place my Heaven.
And for thy sake this shall be my Motto be,
I conquered Greece, one Grecian conquered me.
[…]
Let others warre, great Amurath shall love. (I.i.3-63)

Amurath orders Lala Schahin (Lala Şahin/Lala Shahin) to prepare a masque representing how the Gods once loved. Both in actual history and the play, Lala Schahin [Lala Şahin] is “his tutor, […] whose grave advice and consell hee most followed in all his weightie affaires, being at that time one of his chiefc counsellors” (Knolles, 190), being left alone on stage reflects his discontent regarding Amurath’s transformation:

No more King now: poor Subject AMVRATH,
Whom I have seen break through a Troupe of Men,
Like lightning from a Cloud:
[…]
now lyeth lurking in a womans arms
Drencht in the Lethe of Ignoble lust (L.ii.93-100)
Discontent by the “enticing woman”, who has caused Amurath to be scorned and laughed at by his subjects decides that “[...] bloud, not water must wash off this stain” (I.ii.115).

The first step of Lala Schahin’s plan is to indirectly show that Amurath’s love for Eumorphe, a mere concubine, is transitory, and not befitting a ruler through a masque. The first masque is composed of the lovers Jupiter and Juno, Mars and Venus, Apollo and Pallas and Neptune and Diana. Each dances a masque dance with his goddess. While Jove and Juno are dancing, Juno, observing that Jove is looking at Eumorphe, accuses him of coming to earth “For some new Harlot, some new Queene for you” (I.iv.201). Thus, the first masque shows that love is transitory. In the second masque, Philoxesus, a Captain, presents Alexander the Great with Darius “the wonder of her sex” and other ladies, but he refuses such “effeminate presents” in preference of “A man, a Souldier, strong with his wounds,” (I.v.320) illustrating that great rulers should be preoccupied with war instead of lust. Amurath leaves the masque troubled, but still pursues his lust “Eumorphe, Love, Queene, Wife, let’s haste to Bed!” (I.v.375). Nevertheless, both Eumorphe and Amurath feel uncomfortable. Eumorphe fears that she will not always have “a King my subject” because his love will disappear with her beauty, and dreams of going to Elizium (Heaven), which acts as a foreshadowing of her tragic end (II.ii). On the other hand, Amurath fears people’s power to condemn a king to death is tormented by the fact that while “Poore men may love” he can’t (II.iii.523). But, above all, he considers what the Christians might think: “The Christians now will scoff at Mahomet;/Perchance they sent this wretch Eumorphe thus to enchant me!” (II.iii.551-2). While Amurath is caught between lust and duties, Lala Schahin enters Amurath’s room disguised as the ghost of his father, Orchanes (Sultan Orhan):

I was first of all the Turkish Kings
That Europe knew, and the fond Christians plague,
What coward blood ran flowing in my veins,
When thou wert begot: who marrest all
Thy Fathers acts, by thy untam’d desires,
Wherefore with Stygian curses I will lade thee
First may she prove a Strumpet to thy Bed
Be her lips poison, and let her loose embrace,
Be venomous as Scorpions! If she conceive’d
A Generation from thee, let it be
As ominous as thou hast beene to me! (II.iv.591-601)
His father, the first Turkish “King” to be known in Europe, calls him the offspring of “coward blood”, cursing both his concubine and their possible future children. Of course, both the masque and ghost scene are theatrical devices employed by Goffe. Eumorphae’s end is exactly the same as Irene’s as described by Knolles. Amurath calls his men Schahin, Eurenofes and Chafe-Illobegge, following the mock ghost scene, and asks them what they would do if they possessed such as superior creature. Schahin indicates that he would enjoy his love freely, Eurenofes says that nothing could conjure him “from betwixt her armes” while Chase Illibegge says that if he had a crown “That Queen should be the chiefest gem t’adorne it,” (II.v.691). Then Amurath take Schahin’s sword and cuts off Eumorphes’ head to the great surprise of the nobles:

Amurath: [...]

There kis fe now (captaines) doe! And clap her cheeke;
This is the face that did fo captive me:
These were the lookes that so bewitcht mine eyes;
Here be the lips, that I but for to touch,
Gave over Fortune, Victory, Fame, and all;
These were two lying mirrors where I lookt
And thought I saw [saw] a world of happines fe. (II. V. 715-19)

Through such means, Amurath breaks free from his infatuation with his concubine and returns to military conquests: “Now Tutor, hall our fwords be exerci/ed,/In ripping up the breaths of Chri/tians./Say Generals! Whether is firft? [first]” (II.V.720-22). Thus, the second act concludes the legend of Mahomet and Hyrene. According to Vitkus “The Couragious Turke suggests that when English readers and spectator thought of Moors and Turks, they imagined them as rash and violent oppressors who made it a point of religion and military honor to kill innocent women” (Vitkus: 2003, 101).

The next three acts of the play, based on Knolles’ part on “Amurath”, mainly deals with the capture of Adrianople and Battle of Kosovo, apart from historical events such as the establishment of the devshirme system and janissaries, Bajazet’s marriage to Hatam (German Ogly [Germenoğlu]’s daughter), Aladin’s attempt to capture Murat I’s territory in Asia and his defeat etc. Act III begins with the introduction of the ideal Christian hero Cobelitz, historically Miles Cobelitz. In Knolles’ text Cobelitz has been described as a “flaue [slave]” (189) and as a Captain soldier who has stabbed Amurath to death when he was walking the field after his victory, which will be quoted later on. In the play, however, he has been given extreme importance. As a Christian

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hero, he fights against the Mohammedan Turks, the common enemy of Christians, with all his power and faith. In III.i he wonders if sacred providence means to “arme” him with “thunder-bolt”, and adds that: “Turke, Ile oppofe thee filll! Heaven has decreed/’That this weake hand, fhall make that tyrant bleed” (III.i. 760-1). On the other hand, Amurath, having regained his interest in war, is determined to fight against Christians. He asks Schahin whether they have killed “A thoufand superftitious Chriftians foules” in the City of “Oreftias” [Orestia- Adrianople], (III.ii. 766-68) and the soldiers present the heads of dead Christians. This is of course a reference to the Battle of Adrianople. When Evrenoses brings news that “To Servia (my Lord) there are troupes of armes,/Gathered to re/fi$t Mahometans” and Chase Illibegge indicates that “At Bulgaria, there they fet on fire,/The Countries as they pa$f$e, ‘twere good we ha$f$e”, they leave to “invade them” (III.ii.804-7).

Knowing that the “Butcherous Turke’s at hand”, Lazarus-Despot of Servia, and Se$f$menos [Sesmenos]- Governor of Bulgaria, have second thoughts about fighting, but Cobelitz gives them courage:

_Cobelitz: […] (Servia) we must, we should, we ought, Ea$e and fucce$e keeps ha$ene$e company, Shall we not blus$h to see the register Of those great Romans, and Heroicke Greekes, Which did tho$e acts (at which our hearts are tru$k Beneath all credence) onely to win fame:_

_And fball not we for that Eternall name? […] (III.iii.834-840)

To which Sefmenos answers: Well $poke (true Christian)/[… (O) then lets to our weapons! Make him yield” (III.iii. 843-48).

On the other hand, the “victorious” Ottomans lead young Christians as prisoners. When [Cairadin] Ba$f$a claims that “these young flaves” are full of “Valor” and “mettall”, Lala Schahin declares that he will set them up as “janizaries”:

_Yes; and to his Highnesse shall performe A service which I long have thought upon, And which his Turkish Majesty requires; They’ll fits to be a neare attendent guard, On all occasions to the Emperour; Therefore they shall be called Janizaries, By me first instituted, for our Princes safeties sake. (912-919)
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(OTAM, 28/Güz 2010)

In Knolles, the establishment of the devshirme system and janissaries is provided in detail as follows:

About this time [when Lala Schahin was sent to invade a country about Philippopolis](by the suggestion of Cara Ruffemes a doctor of the Mahometan law) Zindelu Chelil, then Cadelofher or chief Inftice [Justice] among the Turks, but afterwards better knowne by the name of Catradin Baf a, by the commandement of Amurath, took order, hat every fifth captive of the Chriſtians, being above fifteen yeres [years] old, fould be taken vp for the King, as by law due vnto him: and if the number were vnder five, then to pay to the King for euery head 25 aſpers, by way of tribute: appointing officers for collecting both of fuch captiues and tribute mony [money], of whom the aforefaid Cara Ruffemes himself was chief, as firſt deuifer [deviser] of the matter. By which means great numbers of Chriſtian youths were brought to the court as the kings captiues, which by the counſell of the fame Zinderlu Chelil, were diſtributed among the Turkifh husbandmen in Afia, there to learn the Turkifh language, religion, & maners; where after they had bin brought vp in all painfull labour and trauell by the pace of two or three yeares, they were called vnto the court, & choice made of the better fort of them to attend upon the perfon [person] of the prince, or to ferue him in his wars: where they daily practiſing all fears of activity, are called by the name of Ianizars (that is to say, new foldiers [soldiers]) (191)

In the play, janissaries are presented to Amurath by Cairadin Bassa to be brought up “[i]n all the præcepts [precepts] of our [their] Mahomet:” (III.v. 964) during the ceremony prepared from Bajazet’s marriage to German Oghy’s [Germiyenoğlu] daughter Hatam (later Devlet Sultan/Hatun)16.

The Christians are demoralised. Safmenos is saddened that “Servia, our […] Cities are turned flames” while Lazarus talks about Christians with worse fates then death:

Our dead men are denyed their funerall flames:
And thoſe infectious Carkafe [carcasses] doe performe,
A second murder on the reſt that live!” (1033-5)

But Cobelitz prays that “Heaven avert/And arme you[them] with the proofe of better thoughts!” (1041). Reminding them “Fortune and Heaven will fcorne to try a man,/That hurles his weapons hence and runs away!”. He still believes that they are strong because they are fighting a just cause: “O what an army ‘tis to have a caufe/ Holy and juft; there’s our frenght indeed. (III.vi. 1040-1055) Also when Lazarus asks whether they will continue fighting, Cobelitz indicates that they should fight until their last breath:

16 Later in IV. ii., Amurath blesses Bajazeth and Hatam, pray for their well-being. Enter Eurenofes with six Christian maidens, the daughter of 6 European kings, with cups of gold with jewels in their hands. Amurath gives all the presents brought by Asian lords to Eurenofes, and the six virgins to the service of Hatam.
Laz: What course now Coobelitz, must we still be yoakt
To misery, and murder? We scarce have roome,
Vpon our bodies to receive more wounds,
And must we still oppose our selves to more?
Cob: Yes! We are ready still: a solid minde
Must not be bakt with every blast of Wind!

(IV.iii. 1295-1300)

Although the Ottomans gain a victory, they have to return due to Aladin, King of Caramania, and Amurath’s son-in-law. Amurath is angry because Aladin “Have made him leave off his great Prophets Warres,/When he was hewing downe the Chrifrians” (IV.i. 1073-5), but Aladin, however, is determined to overcome Amurath, but fails to do so. Thus, he gets his wife-Amurath’s daughter, to beg for his life: “My wife’s his Daughter: since we cannot stand/His fury longer, she shall wage his wrath (IV.iv.1352-3). In Knolles’ text, the event has been narrated as follows:

Aladin now on every side defieged in Iconium, and without all hope of escape, sent to the Queene his wife, Amurath’s daughter[...] to adventure her selfe to goe to her angrie father, and craue pardon for his great trepasse & offence. [...] Amurath moft entirely loued this his daughter, and therefore for her fake not only granted vnto her, her husbands life [...] but also his kingdom. (196)

In V.i of the play, Aladin, his Wife, and two children come to beg for Aladin’s life and receive a pardon, and orders him to lead a wing in Servia: “Amurath: [...]...Your selfe shall leade a wing in Servia,/In our immediate Warres, we are to meet/The Christians in Caffanoe’s Plaines with speed:” (V.i.1536-9). Then the scene returns back to the battle between Christians and Ottomans. Cobelitz is hopeful and sure that the heavens support them: “But looke, looke in the ayre (me thinks) I fee/An hoft of Souldiers brandishing their words;/Each corner of the Heaven hoots thunderbolts,/To naile thefe impious forces to the Earth. (V.ii. 1550-1553), while we observe the Turkish side in V.iii. The stage direction states that “The Heavens seem on fire, Comets and blazing Starres appeare.” And Amurath is disturbed:

Amurath: Why set the world on fire? How now (ye Heavens)
Grow you so proud that you must needs put on curl’d lockes;
And cloth your elves in Periwigs of fire?
Mahomet (say) not but I invoke on thee now!
Command the puny-Christians demi-God
Put out thefe flafling flarke, thefe Ignes fatui, (V.iii. 1605-10)
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(OTAM, 28 /Güz 2010)

Then arise four fiends in the shape of black “Turkish kings” and attempt to warn him of his tragic end: “O Amurath! Thy Father’s come, /To warne thee of a suddaine doome,/Which in Caffanoe’s fields attends/To bring thee to thy Helliſh friends.” (V.iii.1641-4). The battle ends with the victory of the Turks, Lazarus is slain, Cobelitz faints and falls for dead. The incidents that take place after the Ottoman victory is narrated by Knolles as follows:

Amurath after this great victorie, with some few of his chiefe captains taking view of the dead bodies, which without number lay on heaps in the field like mountains; a Christian fouldier, fore wounded and all bodie, seeing him, in staggerer manner arose (as if it had bin from death) out of a beape of f lain men, and making towards him, for want of strength fell down divers times by the way as he came, as if he had been a drunken man: at length drawing nigh unto him, when they which guarded the Kings person would haue stayed him, he was by Amurath himselfe commanded to come nearer; supposing that hee would haue craned (craved?) his life of him. Thus, the baſſe dead Christian preſſing neere unto him, as if he would for honor hate halfe kiffed his feet, suddenly stabbed him in the bottome of his bellie with a short dagger, wh ich he had under his soldiers coat, of which wound that great King and conquerour prefently died. The name of this man, (for his courage worthy of eternall memorie) was Miles Cobelitz: who before fore wounded was shortly after in the presence of Baiazet cut into small pieces. (200)

In the play, “Enter Amurath, Bajazeth, Nobles to see the spoile” meanwhile “Cobelitz riſeth as awak, amazed leaning on his Sword, tumbling ore the dead bodies, lookes towards Amurath” . He moves towards Amurath determined realize his life’s purpose: “And I shall performe my lifes true taske” (V.iv. 1777). Cobelitz seeming to kneele “tabs him with a pocket Dagger”. Amurath is devastated to be killed by such a base person: “And muſti I like th’unhappy Roman, dye/By a slaves hand?” (V.iv.1782-3). Amurath asks him if he fears what is going to happen to him, but Cobelitz is brave: “Ha, ha, ha!/I thanke the (great omnipotent) that I/Shall ere laugh out the lag end of my life!” (V.iv.1801-3). Cobelitz indicates that while “your witty furies shall invent/For me, some never heard of punishment;/I fee a guard of Saints ready to take me hence.” (V.iv.1819-21) and eventually dies. He is presented as a martyr who has sacrificed himself for Christianity, while Amurath’s punishment is a forewarning of the certain victory of Christ:

Amurath: O now have I and Fortune tried it out.
With all her best of favours was I frown’d.
Stay (Soul!) a King, a Turke, commands thee stay!
Sure I am but an actor, and must strive
To performe the Tragicke ends of Kings.
 […]
O but I fee Nemesis at hand:
What? Not one Earthquake? One blazing Comet
T’accompany my foule t’his Funerall?

Quake Pluto, for ‘tis I come
A Turke, a Tyrant, and a Conquerour,” (V.iv. 1846-1873)

Amurath dies and Bajazet is king. Following Lala Schahin’s council, he calls Jacup, his younger brother and is strangled to death.

Since Turkish Sultans mainly represented Islam for playwrights and the audience, English Renaissance tragedies about the Turkish Sultans were predominantly Christian plays comparing ‘non-ideal’ Turkish rulers with ‘ideal’ Christian personages. In this respect, Goffe’s *Amurath the First* contains a great density of biblical allusions, where Amurath functions as an anti-type in comparison to his Christian counterparts, Eumurphe and Cobelitz. When faced with Eumurphe, a Saint-like Christian, he is tamed for a while, but gives in to his nature and kills her, which brings on his tragic end. On the other hand, being killed by Cobelitz after the battle, illustrates the working of God’s divine judgement. The punishment awaiting Amurath at the end of the tragedy is a forewarning of the ultimate victory of Christians against the ‘Mohemmedan’ Turks.
Works Cited


