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Book Reviews

Jonathan Burton. *Traffic and Turning: Islam and English Drama, 1579-1624*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005. Pp 319.

What does the word 'Turk' mean in an early modern English context, and why does it appear with such frequency and generate such interest? England was distant enough from the main theatres of Ottoman-Hapsburg conflict not to fear imminent conquest and conversion, a threat that animated a considerable body of text and illustration throughout central, eastern and southern Europe in this period. Yet these themes insistently reappear on the commercial stage, and in 1575 Thomas Newton complained that 'the Turks are even at our doors and ready to come into our houses'.[1] Why?

From 1580 onward, England enjoyed a fruitful commercial and political association with both the Ottomans and Morocco, with an ambassador at Constantinople and factors throughout Ottoman domains. Yet despite the prestige accorded the English through these connections by Thomas Walsingham, William Cecil, and Elizabeth I herself, reports from 1601 indicate that at least some Englishmen considered it 'a matter odious and scandalous to the world to be too familiar with infidels'.[2] To complicate the situation further, it was common for Catholic propagandists to conflate Protestantism and Islam so that Protestants became similarly heretical 'new Turks', and, in return, for the English to identify Catholics as 'Turks … and worse than Turks'.[3] Throw in a rich millenarian seam in which Luther, the Pope and the Prophet Muhammad might all be identified as the Antichrist and the conversion of both Jews and 'Turks' was considered a necessary precondition for the 'end of days'. Defining 'Turk' becomes a complicated proposition.

As a consequence, as research over the past decade has repeatedly demonstrated, neither the 'Turk' nor Islam can be allied to any single, defining notion of 'otherness'. Rather, as Jonathan Burton points out, they are 'discursive site[s] upon which contesting versions of Englishness, Christianity, masculin-

ity, femininity, and nobility are elaborated and proffered' (28). Developing a project begun by scholars such as Jerry Brotton, Palmira Brummett, Lisa Jardine, Gerald MacLean, Nabil Matar and Daniel Vitkus (amongst others), Burton insists that we must 're-Orient' our nineteenth-century conceptions of the Renaissance, recognizing the marginal position of England and Europe in relation to 'global systems dominated by Chinese, Indian, Persian, and Ottoman empires' (38).

Yet in a burgeoning field this book differs from its predecessors in a number of important respects. While earlier critics have sought to tackle the implications of Edward Said's orientalist model for this early period, Burton convincingly argues for the fallacy of any discursive consistency concerning the 'East', or of the application of high orientalist practices to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Instead, he is attracted to Said's notion (put forward in *Culture and Imperialism*) of 'contrapunctal analysis', and attempts to explore the 'polemical dialogism' between East and West through the inclusion of Muslim voices outside the conventional Western historical narrative.

Another defining feature of *Traffic and Turning*, and perhaps its great strength, is a detailed focus upon the gendered dimensions of a body of eastern-fixated early modern plays. As an appendix usefully illustrates, over sixty identifiable plays written and performed between 1579 and 1624 feature Islamic characters, themes or settings. They range widely (and often anachronistically) over recent history and over Mediterranean and Asian geography. Yet Burton is not interested in surveying such plays, favouring a methodological approach that focuses upon the connections between them and the implications of those connections for early modern English preconceptions and apprehensions, particularly concerning masculinity.

His opening chapter explores Marlowe's *Tamburlaine* plays in the context of Anglo-Ottoman traffic, recognizing that *Part 1*, in which the central protagonist's religious position remains indistinct, repeatedly returns to 'Christian Europe's Mediterranean anxieties' (74). Consequently, as Burton skilfully demonstrates, a complication of this situation emerges in *Part 2*, 'a work of art more ideologically complex and mature than its predecessor' (80). Here, Tamburlaine's troubling status as both Muslim and anti-Muslim is brought to the fore, particularly in the Qur'an-burning episode before Babylon.

Chapter Two is arguably less successful than its predecessor. It concerns conversion and desire, specifically in Massinger's *The Renegado* and Mason's *The Turke*. Although Burton makes insightful and important connections between the circulation of texts, trade, and the remodelling of Islam on the stage,

and between skin prejudice and religious difference, some problems emerge. For instance, Burton finds it surprising that, although Muslims on the stage can apparently convert sincerely to Christianity, no Christian experiences a similarly whole-hearted conversion. Given the history of Christian-Muslim encounter, and in particular its dramatization on the stage, I would have been surprised if this dynamic existed in any other form. While Burton is undoubtedly right to place heterosexual desire at the centre of many of these plays, surely depictions of conversion to Islam on the English stage hinge upon denial of the considerable numbers that did convert. In their dramatic forms, such conversions represent an almost inconceivable abandonment and loss of identity, as indicated by Mercadorus's conversion vow, in Robert Wilson's *Three Ladies of London*, to renounce 'my dutie to my Prince, my honour to my parents, and my good will to my cuntry'.[4] This episode does more than 'enact a fantastic recuperation of imperilled English masculinity' (93). It also indicates that these plays are not, as Burton suggests, 'invariably concerned with interfaith desire' (92). Many do share this preoccupation; but for those that follow *Tamburlaine*'s lucrative example in the early 1590s, for instance, sexual desire is only a peripheral concern, if it is present at all.

The third chapter develops these arguments in the context of a play often considered to be the epitome of the 'conversion drama', Daborne's *A Christian Turn'd Turk*. In placing this drama at the centre of a matrix of mutually enforcing concerns — increasing trade, gender, sexuality and inevitably desire — Burton provocatively teases out the implications of the play's hysterical histrionics, before offering a short but stunning reading of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*.

We then move away from the professional theatre to what are undoubtedly the two most important chapters, both of which offer surprising (and at times extraordinary) interventions in the field. The first (Chapter Four) concerns the connections and differences between pageant and closet drama, from the appearance of Eastern and Islamic figures in the Lord Mayor's Day Pageants to the claustrophobia of Greville's *Mustapha*. Here Burton is at his best, drawing important but largely unfamiliar material into an argument that indicates how what are erroneously considered intransigent prejudices were actually far more malleable, particularly when confronted by economic and political necessities. The second (Chapter Five) offers a detailed consideration of the multiple connections between Jews and Turks in this drama. This work has been hinted at in earlier studies (for example, in James Shapiro's *Shakespeare and the Jews*), but here it convincingly charts the evolution of this medieval

association. I would, perhaps, take issue with one element of Burton's reading of Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*. He argues that the conflicts of this play are generated in part by 'anxieties — not unlike those felt in Marlowe's England — over Christian capitulation and allegiance to an Islamic power' (223). Yet Marlowe goes to some lengths to indicate the Catholicism of Malta's inhabitants. He equates Catholicism with stereotypical Islamic brutality, a point which (here as elsewhere in this study) is perhaps not prominent enough.

Burton concludes with an intriguing analysis of Shakespeare's *Othello* alongside Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan's remarkable *Geographical History of Africa*, translated into English in 1601 under the Latinate post-baptismal name of Leo Africanus. The connections he establishes between these texts enrich one's appreciation of both, and his conclusions concerning the 'religious color' (253) of Othello's skin are fascinating. This final section fits very well with Burton's larger project of 'contrapunctal analysis', since it very clearly — although not unproblematically — deals with a text written by a writer of Muslim origin that 'competes with and supplements the European discourse of Islam' (233).

For this reader, the problem with earlier examples of this approach, from Sa'd-ud-din's *Taj-Ut-Tevarikh* and Ahmad Ibn Qasim al-Hajari's *The Supporter of the Faith Against the Infidels* onward, is that their inclusion serves little discernible purpose. Burton is eloquent on the necessity of reconceiving Western discourse and recognizing Muslim engagement with, and modification of, European ideology, which is indeed a vital project. But the strengths of this text — and they are manifold — lie in its recognition of the bewildering variety of ways in which the English imagined themselves in terms of Islam and Islamic cultures in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The inclusion of Muslim voices, although at points provocative, never satisfactorily indicates how 'Muslims contributed to the discourses by which they were known' (233), particularly within an English context. Nevertheless, Burton's is a valuable book, indispensable for students and scholars in this field, which complicates any easy definition of the 'Turk' and Islam in early modern England. Considered in relation to the entrenched divisions of much contemporary discourse, this indeterminacy and its implications are profoundly important.

MATTHEW DIMMOCK

Notes

1 Augustine Curio, *A Notable Historie of the Saracens*, trans. Thomas Newton (London, 1575), sigs C3v-C4r.
2 Public Record Office, London. State Papers 12/275/94.
3 See the examples in Matthew Dimmock, *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
4 Robert Wilson, *A right excellent and famous Comedy called the three Ladies of London* ... (London, 1584), sig. F1v.

Celia R. Daileader. *Racism, Misogyny, and the* Othello *Myth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp x, 256.

Celia R. Daileader's lively and provocative discussion of *Othello* and inter-racial sexuality begins with her concept of 'Othellophilia': 'the critical and cultural fixation in Shakespeare's tragedy of inter-racial marriage to the exclusion of broader definitions, and more positive visions, of inter-racial eroticism' (6). Why, she wonders, did the pattern of a sexual relationship between a black man and a white woman (as opposed to a black woman and a white man) come to be such a prevalent literary trope? *Antony and Cleopatra* is also a great Shakespearean tragedy featuring inter-racial sexuality—assuming one believes that the dramatist's Cleopatra was meant to be black—but it has never achieved the universal appeal of *Othello*.

Daileader finds the answer in the imbrication of racism with misogyny. Mutually reinforcing constructs, racism and misogyny work hand in hand to demonize not just black sexuality but female sexuality as well. Ever since the early modern period, which begins Daileader's survey, the culture of white patriarchy, frightened of female sexual autonomy, has elided that fear with a horror of miscegenation. Thus, 'any woman who wants, even subconsciously, to be sexual with a black man (or a gypsy), must want to demean herself … [and] by definition she deserves to be punished' (162).

Daileader's first chapter, which will be of most interest to readers of *Early Theatre*, briefly surveys early modern plays featuring inter-racial couples. In Shakespeare's earliest tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, we see the sexual union of