

Bernadette Diane Andrea and Linda MacJannet, eds. *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds*.

Early Modern Cultural Studies. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. xiii + 272 pp. £55. ISBN: 978-0-230-11542-2.

The introduction to *Early Modern England and Islamic Worlds* offers a compact and helpful survey of scholarly work interested in Islam and early modern English literature. Updating and expanding a previously published essay by Linda McJannet (one of five pieces in this collection previously published in a 2009 edition of *Early Theatre*), this history divides a century's worth of work into three waves, each with distinct hermeneutic tendencies: the first wave, Andrea and McJannet suggest, comprised works published between 1915 and 1937 that take as their concern the historical accuracy and aesthetic merits of early modern literary works interested in Islamic worlds; a second wave moving through the 1960s and 1970s explored European images of Islam. Finally, a third, post-Saidian wave from the mid-1990s to the present has drawn on the analytical tools of postcolonial theory to highlight hybridity, multiplicity, and cultural permeability.

The current collection situates itself within this "third wave" (3) seeking primarily to expand and refine the work of several key contributors to the field. Thus works by Daniel Vitkus, Gerald MacLean, Nabil Matar, Matthew Dimmock, and Jonathan Burton, as well as earlier work by the collection's editorial team, are frequently cited and engaged. Without exception, this engagement is cautious and collegial; none of the claims made in these essays seek to revolutionize or radically dismantle current models. Instead, their modest contributions might be grouped under four headings, with some pieces fitting comfortably in more than one area. Several essays seek to reconsider the import of particular texts and/or enlarge the canon of texts under study by those interested in Islam and English literature. Other essays are concerned with expanding our awareness of the cultural multiplicity of Islamic locales encountered by the English. A third area of emphasis involves honing our understanding of the racial formations and imperial drives animating English interest in Islamic worlds. Finally a pair of essays focused on material culture considers the integration of Eastern commodities into the drama and everyday life in early modern London.

The collection begins with Andrew Moran's essay on *Othello*, arguably the text most frequently cited by scholars in the field. For Moran, Shakespeare's choice to set his play in a Cyprus fated to be overrun by the Ottomans signals the treatment of Islam as an analog for Protestantism wherein the play represents "what is lost in the movement from Catholic to Protestant understandings of baptism" (29). Joel Slotkin's reevaluation of Thomas Goffe's *The Courageous Turk* also turns to *Othello*. Yet where Moran posits a Shakespeare sympathetic to Catholicism, Slotkin highlights Goffe's emphasis on the ways in which social rather than natural constraints direct the behavior of the Turkish protagonist. Consequently, Slotkin goes on to describe Goffe's frequently dismissed play as

“less racist than Shakespeare’s *Othello*, where a Christian Moor who is fully acculturated to Western society nonetheless proves unable to restrain his natural passions” (168).

Beginning with *Othello* may be a conventional move for texts interested in English literary encounters with Islam, but what may be more promising for the future of the field is the number of essays here that urge looking beyond the established canon of “Turk plays.” Annaliese Connolly insists on the relevance of crusading dramas written by early modern dramatists, arguing that works such as *The Four Prentices of London* and *Guy of Warwick* “utilize the threat posed by the Turk to reinforce a traditional Christian worldview” (140) in direct response to Marlovian skepticism established in *Tamburlaine*. Su Fang Ng similarly argues for the inclusion of Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, pointing to the play’s interest in “the politics of border zones in the Eastern Mediterranean” (175) and particularly its border crossing figures, the eunuch, the renegade, the ambassador and the pirate. Dennis Britton’s essay on Sir Walter Raleigh’s *The Life and Death of Mahomet* is one of several that push the collection beyond a focus on dramatic works, reading Raleigh’s text as a reflection on English Hispanophobia, but also and more importantly as a measure of “early modern English interest in establishing political legitimacy independent of race and religion” (36). Bernadette Andrea’s essay on *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* likewise takes up ideas about race and imperial desire by arguing that Wroth integrates a “Tartar masque” into her romance to highlight the “ambivalence of the emerging racialized binary of black-versus-white as it was mapped onto the linkage of ‘the East’ and ‘the West’” (75).

Still more ambitious with regard to broadened horizons are the essays by Philip Palmer, Javad Ghatta, and Bindu Malieckal. Palmer’s examination of the production and circulation of a section of Peter Mundy’s *Itinerarium Mundi* illuminates the textual practices at work in representations of the Ottoman Empire while suggesting a means of reconstructing the reading practices of early modern English travelers and scholars studying the Ottoman Empire. Ghatta and Malieckal push the horizons of the field still further in bringing non-European texts — Safavid and Mughal chronicles, respectively — into contrapuntal analysis with English works of the period. Unfortunately, the claims here are often so cautious as to disappoint the ambition of the project. For this reader, at least, it is insufficient merely to note that non-Western sources “remain relevant” (117) to histories of East-West exchange. The field still awaits a full-scale exploration of the poetics of transculturation (though McJannet seems to suggest that Stephen Greenblatt’s recent work on “cultural mobility” may at least supply a model). Such a project might provide a capstone to the field’s third wave, or perhaps even function as the vanguard of a fourth.

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