Jonathan Burton’s *Traffic and Turning* is part of a recent renaissance in the study of Islam, and in particular, of Anglo-Ottoman relations, in early modern literary studies. Contesting Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, Burton suggests that early modern Europe did not have the power to construct the East discursively and so to dominate it. Unlike other scholars, however, he argues that English discourse was not wholly consistent in compensating for Ottoman power. Rather, contradictory representations of Muslims vary according to domestic concerns and the need to construct English identities. In re-orienting the Renaissance eastwards, Burton numbers among scholars challenging the New Historicist focus on the Americas to bring a renewed attention to Old World relations prominent in the early modern dramatic corpus. Shifting the discussion to multidirectional cultural exchanges, Burton proposes the term “trafficking” to account for both differences and shared values. As the center for Euro-Asian economies, the Ottoman Empire’s trading and cultural exchanges with Europe produced the European “Renaissance.”

The first chapter treats Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* plays, setting up the argument for later chapters on Turk plays inspired by Marlowe’s original example. Reading *Tamburlaine, Part I* in the context of Anglo-Ottoman diplomacy, in which both sides underplayed religious differences to legitimize their arms trade, Burton argues that, depending on whether he is needed as protector of Europe, Tamburlaine is either distanced or linked to Islam in “rhetorics of legitimation” (62) aimed at promoting English mercantile interests. Burton explains the differences between the two plays by positing a deliberate rewriting of Tamburlaine in the sequel. While not allowing him to be easily categorized, *Tamburlaine, Part II* emphasizes Tamburlaine’s religious difference that had previously been muted. Forcing his audience to choose among demonized Turks, corrupt Christians, and a Tamburlaine who out-Turks them all, Marlowe denies them simple dichotomies, leaving us with a sequel more unsettling than its original. Burton’s strength is in moving the discussion of the *Tamburlaine* plays away from an undue emphasis on Tamburlaine’s utter strangeness.

The next two chapters analyze the problem of conversion in lesser-known plays with Turkish themes. Stagings of potential Christian conversion to Islam in plays like Philip Massinger’s *Renegado*, Thomas Kyd’s *Solyman and Perseda*, Thomas Goffe’s *The Courageous Turk*, and John Mason’s *The Turk* oppose a hostile Muslim masculinity against subversive (Christian) femininity. Chapter 2 suggests that the subordination of gender to religion serves to shore up an anxious Christian masculinity. While two types of Christian women appear in the plays—the one valiantly resisting the appeals of Muslim men while the second fatally attracted to them to the point of betraying their co-religionists—Christian men are never depicted as genuine converts to Islam. Instead male protagonists alone are able to convert Muslims. Chapter 3 considers Muslim conversion to Christianity, showing how the plays, including again Massinger’s *Renegado* and John Fletcher’s *The Island Princess*, stage a fantasy of Muslim women’s submission to Christian patriarchy, which, however, seems embedded in the overwhelming fear of
men’s conversion to Islam. Tellingly, this chapter discusses Christian conversion to Islam as much as it discusses Muslim conversion—beginning with Robert Daborne’s *A Christian Turned Turk*—perhaps speaking to early modern obsessions about the Islamic threat.

Chapter 4 examines other dramatic forms, namely the Lord Mayor’s Day Pageants and closet dramas, with more positive representations of Islam. The Lord Mayor’s Day Pageants combine medieval religious drama with early modern travelers’ tales to present domesticated, beneficent Eastern figures to support a mercantilist ideology. Fulke Greville’s closet drama, *Mustafa*, on the other hand, uses Ottoman history to ponder issues of English dynastic succession. Although “good” Muslims are not realistic characters either, Burton argues, “in the age of trafficking, English culture came to accept the possibility of exemplary and even run of the mill Muslims” (195). The underlying assumption of progress from medieval to early modern is evident also in the distinction Burton makes between the “textual-historical” (22) inventory of Muslim stereotypes inherited from a history of medieval crusades *versus* the “experiential” (22) record arising from contemporary trading relations with the Ottomans. That assumption, is belied, however, by the medieval archive itself. Instead of the morality plays, whose extant texts are dated in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, putting them closer to the early modern period, the comparison between medieval and early modern representations of Muslims perhaps should be made, despite the focus on drama, with medieval Arthurian romances with their share of both exemplary and converted Muslims as well as evil ones.

Chapter 5 considers representations of Jews, arguing that England’s increased trade with the Ottomans led to greater contact with Jewish middlemen. While Muslim roles expand to include more noble ones, Jews are scapegoated. In Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, when the Ottoman overlords announce a visit to collect an overdue tribute, Malta’s Christian governors put the burden of paying the tribute on their Jewish residents. Burton argues that Barabas’s villainy is a “function of the suspect and shifting nature of Christian-Muslim relations” (222). Through representations of Jewish villainy the English displace anxieties about their own compromised Christian ideals in their dealings with the Turk. Finally, Chapter 6 examines *The Geographical History of Africa* by Hassan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan, better known as Leo Africanus. It argues that Leo is engaged in an act of textual mimicry and autoethnography—Mary Louise Pratt’s term for the tangled mix of assimilation and resistance in colonized subjects’ writings. Burton suggests that unlike Shakespeare’s *Othello*, which is finally a “troubling fantasy of containment” (254), Leo’s text ultimately destabilizes European discourses that are anti-Islamic and anti-African.

In his introduction, Burton distinguishes his project from others and answers Ania Loomba’s challenge to take “seriously cultural exchanges that accompanied commercial and diplomatic exchange” and to listen “for the Eastern voices drowned out by a more accessible and consequently more audible European archive” (14). Thus, unlike other scholars who neglect Muslim sources, Burton says he will include “whenever possible, translated accounts of Ottoman and North African Muslim writers” (14). While a worthy goal, Burton’s book is finally not fully comparative. He includes only a handful of
Islamic sources, reading them in translation. Islamic voices remain very much in the periphery. The one Muslim text Burton focuses on at greater length is Leo Africanus’ *Geographical History*, that complicated case of hybridized identity written when Leo was a Christian convert at the court of Pope Leo X, and a work much-commented on within English literary studies because of its connection to *Othello*. By the end, however, Burton seems to have shifted his goals, reframing his project as fundamentally about English drama rather than “a full examination of Muslim discursive practices” and acknowledging that he is not “qualified to undertake such a project” (233). Ultimately, Burton’s well-written and interesting book reveals both the opportunities and the problems of interdisciplinary work. Disciplinary training ill-equiops us to address fully the cross-cultural nature of the past, and the desire to incorporate Muslim texts out of sound theoretical reasons collides with the lack of linguistic training. Nonetheless, Burton shows the English archive is still a rich mine to be excavated, and he does this very well. A worthy and well-conceived project, this book should be a welcome addition to the growing list of Ottoman-centered studies of English literature.

Su Fang Ng
University of Oklahoma