This point is well established in Kate Narveson’s “The *Ars Longa* Trope in a Sublunary World.” With Stephen Pender’s concluding “Habits of Thought, Structures of Feeling,” the tropological world of the Renaissance is extended into a much wider project. “Habits of thought is an ancient endeavor,” indeed, as Pender reminds us; but it is a continuous enterprise (306). The fundamental problem with this book lies in the factitious world of tropology. Why these tropes? The essays gathered here in homage to Gale Carrithers are all, in different ways, excellent and frequently remarkably illuminating. Most of the essayists attempt to write to the general theme of the whole book, and the general editor has been largely successful in sustaining considerable unity among the various contributors so that the volume is coherent. But “cultural imagination” is obviously not well or fully contained in such loose baggage as these tropologies might wish to hold or embrace.


*Women and Islam in Early Modern Literature* makes an important contribution to a growing body of scholarship on Europe’s encounter with Muslim cultures in the early modern period. Andrea’s exploration of the “significance of women’s agency in the inaugural Anglo-Ottoman encounter” from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century is bold and innovative (1). English engagements with the Islamic world in the period extended into regions of the Mediterranean, Persia, and India, but Andrea’s scope includes the first two regions, to the exclusion of the latter. Andrea joins other scholars like Nabil Matar in overturning the Orientalist paradigm of a dichotomy between a powerful West and subordinate East in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and acknowledges that in this period, “Britain did not enjoy military or industrial power over Islamic countries”(4). But she is also attuned to the historical shift in the late sixteenth century by which time the “anglocentric project of global imperialism imagined at the close of the sixteenth century frequently represented the Ottomans...
as positive foils” (4).

Clearly at stake in these early Anglo-Ottoman or Anglo-Muslim encounters is the struggle for the power of self-representation; in this climate, English cultural and literary productions, as Andrea points out, not surprisingly, rehearse the pervasive English anxieties about masculinity as evident in the motif of forced religious conversion of Christian men, or “turning Turk” in many cultural formations of the period. In order to understand the complex dynamic of these discursive and material power struggles of the period, Andrea interrogates the “effacement of women’s agency in recent studies on Anglo-Ottoman relations, most of which focus on gendered representations in male-authored travel narratives and dramas to the exclusion of sustained attention to women’s cultural productions” (2). Offering a different perspective, Andrea brings into the scholarship a new archive of writings by women sovereigns, writers, and travelers, analyzing the “discourses of this era’s Anglo-Ottoman—and more broadly Anglo-Islamic relations” (2). Thus, she focuses on individual, interactive, and collaborative textual productions such as diplomatic letters, travelogues, and religious tracts, as well as… prose fiction, poetry, and drama” (2), while mapping a “series of distinct but inter-linked cultural moments from the late sixteenth century through the turn of the eighteenth century” (8).

For her critical theoretical frame, however, Andrea adapts a somewhat essentialist approach of “gynocriticism” focusing on “woman as writer” (and not only as reader) while incorporating techniques of feminist critique which interrogates, among other things, the fissures of male-constructed narratives and histories, attending to images and stereotypes of women in literature, and the omissions of women in literary and critical histories (2). Before examining the promise and limitations of Andrea’s feminist methodology, let me first outline the strengths of its scope and methodology. Eschewing any simple teleology, Andrea illuminates a dialogic interrelationship and comparison between early modern women’s cultural productions in relation to “emergent discourses such as imperialism and orientalism” (8); different women’s voices emerge in a rich dialogic perspective on their engagements—literary, religious, personal, cultural—within Europe’s encounters with Islam, more specifically with the Ottomans. The story
she tells draws in disparate and wide-ranging narratives, revealing early modern English women’s engagement with Muslim cultures and empires in ways that enable us to re-think the categories of gender and femininity when viewed cross-culturally. In this complex mapping lies the strength and originality of this book.

In an organization of four chapters and a coda, Andrea takes us on a far-ranging journey: Chapter One focuses on Anglo-Ottoman relations in the Elizabethan period via the letters and gifts exchanged between Queen Elizabeth and Safiye, the Turkish Queen mother (1595-1603) or walide sultan. Here the author shows us how the exchanges between these women re-figure both the Ottoman discourses which viewed the sultanate of women, of the power of the queen mothers, as a period of decline, and Elizabethan masculinist paradigms of the queen as a “virgin queen” or a “female prince”; in this context, the gifts exchanged between the women “may be seen to short-circuit the patriarchal symbolic system that casts women as objects and men as agents of exchange” (28). Chapter Two re-assesses Mary Wroth’s prose romance *Urania* and its second part, The Countess of Montgomery’s *Urania* (in manuscript) via links drawn between the imaginary geography of the “the sub-text of Ottoman imperialism…and the western European imperialists’ counter-response as expressed through the wish-fulfillment of romance” (34). Furthermore, in the manuscript, Wroth introduces the influence of “Sherlian discourse,” implying her own identification with Sir Robert Shirley’s “Persian wife.” Chapter Three offers a compelling account of three Quaker women missionaries, Mary Fisher, who had an audience with the Ottoman Sultan, Katherine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, who were imprisoned on the Isle of Malta. Quakerism’s relationship with Islam is revealed as having particular import in showing Quaker women as publishers of truth among radical sectarians, who in England were condemned by conservatives as “Protestant Mahometans” (57).

Eighteenth-century “feminist orientalism” and strains of “counter-orientalism” figure in Chapters Four and Five. Here Andrea demonstrates how instantiated by the masculinist travel literature of the seventeenth century, the “image of the ‘oppressed’ Muslim woman became the basis for the uneasy marriage between English women’s protests against gender oppression at the turn of the eighteenth cen-
tury and their complicity with the orientalist and racist ideologies that supported England’s emerging global empire” (80). If the feminist orientalist dichotomy between Turkish women’s “natural” slavery and the English woman’s struggles with patriarchy despite her “free born” status emerged frequently in women’s writings of the period, Andrea unveils an interesting interrogation of orientalism in the writings of Delarivier Manley, especially in her autobiographical fictions, *The New Atalantis* and *The Adventures of Rivella*. In the concluding Coda, Andrea continues her explorations of challenges to feminist orientalism. Here the author does something novel in moving away from the persistent focus on the famous hammam scene from Montagu’s writings, with its recuperations of a patriarchal gaze; instead, argues for re-reading *Montagu’s Turkish Embassy Letters* “in dialogue with her precursors and with contemporary Muslim Arab women,” for instance in Assia Djebar’s *Women of Algiers* (121).

To sum University Press, *Women in Islam* productively contributes to the conversations about the Anglo-Muslim encounters in the early modern period, adding an important perspective of women travelers and writers. However, the feminist methodology informing her text is somewhat under theorized, lacking in nuance at times. For instance, throughout the study, “patriarchy” and “patriarchal culture” are often invoked as givens, stable categories in a gynocriticism that seems somewhat dated in an era when gender studies have moved beyond binaries. At times, she gestures to the theoretical perspectives of Luce Irigaray and Eve Sedgewick (13), but does not follow that path of inquiry about the constructions of gender in language and ideology. Finally, however, despite this lacuna, Andrea’s book does provide a rich historical perspective on the lives and writings of early modern women in terms of their insights into and interactions with Anglo-Muslim encounters.


This immensely complicated, jargon-filled book argues that “Milton views reason as the poetic gift of peaceful difference and that he