

## “Turned Turk, and died a slave”: A New Historicist Reading of Robert Daborne’s *A Christian Turned Turk*<sup>1</sup>

### “Turned Turk, and died a slave”: Robert Daborne’un *A Christian Turned Turk* Başlıklı Tiyatro Eserinin Yeni Tarihselci Yöntemle İncelenmesi

Mustafa ŞAHİNER\*  
Güliz Merve BAYRAKTAR\*\*

#### Highlights:

- New Historicism indicates the close relationship between history and literary works.
- To understand apostasy in the play, one needs the historical background of the seventeenth century.
- These plays commonly introduced Turks as sources of immorality and heresy.
- Daborne’s play links Ward’s transgression to a tragic downfall and eternal damnation.
- By mixing facts with fiction, Daborne defames Islam to prevent Christian conversions.

**Abstract:** New Historicism provides a critical look for the narrative focusing on its historical background with a claim that a text is not independent from its era. The method emphasises the significance of understanding the power relations and dynamics within the society when interpreting literary works and it argues that literary works nourish from the social and cultural atmosphere to which they belong. Therefore, the new historicists seek to reshape a text in historical discourse in order to procure realistic interpretations. From this perspective, this paper states that degrading the motives for conversion to sexual propensity of John Ward, Robert Daborne masks the real causes behind conversion in *A Christian Turned Turk* like many other Elizabethan playwrights who stimulate hatred towards Turks and Islam in their plays since they saw them as a growing threat to Christianity. Regarding the new historicist notion of examining the relationship between the author, the text and history, it is argued in the study that the playwright’s justification for Ward’s conversion is not realistic and that he distorted the historical facts intentionally for the purpose of defaming Turks in the public eye.

**Keywords:** Drama, Apostasy, Turning Turk, Piracy, Christianity

#### Öne Çıkanlar:

- Yeni Tarihselcilik, tarih ve edebi eserler arasındaki yakın ilişkiyi belirtir.
- Oyundaki din değiştirme kavramını anlamak için on yedinci yüzyılın tarihi arka planı gereklidir.
- Bu oyunlar genellikle Türkleri ahlaksızlık ve sapkınlık kaynağı olarak tanıtır.
- Daborne’un oyunu, Ward’un sapkınlığını trajik bir düşünüş ve ebedi lanetle ilişkilendirir.
- Daborne, gerçeği kurgu ile karıştırarak İslam’ı karalar ve Hristiyan dönüşümlerini engeller.

\* Doç. Dr, Akdeniz Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, Antalya. sahinermustafa@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-2060-1706

\*\* Doktorant, Karabük Üniversitesi, Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim Dalı, gulizmervebayraktar@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-0801-8283

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**Öz:** Yeni Tarihselcilik, bir metnin çağından bağımsız olmadığı iddiasıyla anlatının tarihsel arka planına odaklanarak eleştirel bir bakış açısı sunar. Söz konusu yöntem, edebi eserleri yorumlarken toplumdaki güç ilişkilerini ve dinamiklerini anlamının önemini vurgular ve edebi eserlerin ait olduğu sosyal ve kültürel atmosferden bağımsız bir şekilde değerlendirilemeyeceğini öne sürer. Bu nedenle yeni tarihselciler, gerçekçi yorumlara ulaşmak için bir metni tarihsel söylem içerisinde yeniden şekillendirmeye çalışırlar. Bu yaklaşımla bu makale, oyunlarında Hıristiyanlığa karşı büyüyen bir tehdit olarak gördükleri Türklere ve İslam'a karşı nefreti teşvik eden diğer birçok birinci Elizabeth dönemi oyun yazarı gibi, Robert Daborne'un da *A Christian Turned Turk* adlı tiyatro oyununda John Ward'un din değiştirme motivasyonlarını onun cinsel arzularına indirgeyerek din değiştirmenin ardındaki gerçek nedenleri maskeleyip iddia etmektedir. Yazar, metin ve tarih arasındaki ilişkiyi inceleyen yeni tarihselci anlayışla incelendiğinde, Daborne tarafından Ward'ın din değiştirmesine ilişkin sunulan gerekçenin gerçekçi olmadığı ve oyunun Türkleri karalamak amacıyla tarihi gerçekleri kasıtlı olarak çarpıtıldığı ileri sürülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Tiyatro, Din değiştirme, Müslüman olma, Korsanlık, Hıristiyanlık

**Genişletilmiş Özet:** “Turned Turk and died a slave”: A New Historicist Reading of Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk* başlıklı makale, Robert Daborne'un *A Christian Turned Turk* adlı tiyatro oyununun derinlemesine Yeni Tarihselci bir analizini sunar. Yeni Tarihselcilik, edebi metinler ve tarihsel bağlamları arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi inceleyen bir edebi teoridir ve edebiyatın, üretildiği dönemin tarihsel ve kültürel dinamikleri göz önüne alınmadan tam olarak anlaşılamayacağını öne sürer. Makale, Stephen Greenblatt gibi önemli isimlerin bu alana katkılarını referans alarak teorik çerçeveyi kurar. Greenblatt'ın, edebiyat, tarih ve güç dinamiklerinin birbiriyle ilişkili olduğu savı, toplumsal güçlerin edebi eserleri nasıl şekillendirdiğini anlamada kritik öneme sahiptir.

Makale, Daborne'un oyununda din değiştirme (dinden dönme) kavramına odaklanır ve din değiştirme ile ilgili toplumsal tutum ve yaklaşımları kavrayabilmek için on yedinci yüzyılın tarihsel arka planının anlaşılmasının gerekliliğini vurgular. Bu dönemde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, İngiliz edebiyatında sıklıkla olumsuz olarak tasvir edilirdi; bu da Müslümanlara yönelik yaygın endişe ve önyargının ve onların Hristiyan Avrupa'ya yönelik oluşturduğu tehdidin bir yansıması olarak görülebilir. Bu kültürel bağlam, Türkleri ahlaksız, sapkın ve aşağılık kişiler olarak tasvir eden Daborne da dahil olmak üzere diğer bazı İngiliz oyun yazarlarını etkilemiştir.

*A Christian Turned Turk*, Müslüman bir kadın olan Voada ile evlenmek için Müslüman olan Hristiyan korsan Kaptan John Ward'un hikayesini anlatır. Oyun, Ward'un dönüşümünü, daha geniş ekonomik ve sosyal faktörleri göz ardı ederek, sadece şehvet ve ihanetle motive edilmiş bir ihanet olarak sunar. Makale, Daborne'un Ward karakteri tasvirinin son derece taraflı olduğunu ve dönemin din değiştirme olayının gerçek doğasını kasıtlı olarak yanlış yansıttığını savunur. Daborne, birçok kişinin korsanlığa başlamasına ve ardından din değiştirmelerine yol açan ekonomik zorlukları kabul etmek yerine, Ward'un motivasyonunu sadece şehvet ve ihanete indirgemştir.

Makale ayrıca, erken modern İngiliz tiyatrosunda Türklerin ve Müslümanların olumsuz tasvir edilme eğilimini inceler. Bu dönemde Christopher Marlowe'un *Tamburlaine* ve Thomas Goffe'un *The Raging Turk* gibi oyunları, Türkleri sıklıkla acımasız ve fanatik olarak tasvir eder ve mevcut önyargıları pekiştirir. Bu tasvir, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nu şeytanlaştırmak ve Hıristiyanlıktan İslam'a geçenleri caydırmak için başlatılan bilinçli bir propagandanın parçası olarak ortaya çıkar. Pek çok İngiliz, gücünün ve refahının zirvesinde olan Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda daha iyi yaşam koşulları arayışı içinde İslam'a geçtiğinden, din değiştirme korkusu önemliydi.

Makale, Daborne'un oyununu bu geniş kültürel kaygının bir örneği olarak değerlendirir. Daborne, Ward'un din değiştirmesini onun çöküşüne yol açan büyük bir günah olarak sunmakla, Hıristiyanlar arasında korku salmayı ve dinden dönmeyi caydırmayı amaçlar. Oyunun, Ward'un din değiştirmesinden pişmanlık duyarak öldüğü dramatik sonu, Hıristiyanlığı terk edip İslam'a geçmenin ebedi lanete yol açacağı fikrini güçlendirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu anlatı, genellikle abartılı ve kurgulanmış anlatılar aracılığıyla ahlaki dersler aktarmaya çalışan erken modern oyunların didaktik amacına da uygundur.

Makale, edebi metinleri Yeni Tarihselci bir bakış açısıyla incelemenin önemini vurgulayarak

sonuçlanır. Bu yaklaşım, tarihsel ve kültürel dinamiklerin edebiyatı nasıl etkilediğine dair daha incelikli bir anlayışa olanak tanır. Akademisyenler tarih, edebiyat ve güç arasındaki etkileşimi inceleyerek edebi eserleri şekillendiren temel motivasyonları ve önyargıları ortaya çıkarabilirler. *A Christian Turned Turk* örneğinde Yeni Tarihselci bir okuma, Daborne’un oyununun kendi zamanının önyargılarını ve kaygılarını nasıl yansıttığını ve sürdürdüğünü, İslam’ın karalanmasına katkıda bulunduğunu ve sosyal ve dini statükoyu nasıl güçlendirdiğini ortaya koyar.

## Introduction

New Historicism as a literary theory is a detailed version of historicism which also indicates the close relationship between history and literary works. The theory states that analysing literary texts cannot be carried out without focusing on the era and the writer. Therefore, new historicism scrutinises the culture which contains the power relations between the hierarchical groups of an era since its influence on literature is indisputable. Stephen Greenblatt who coined the term in his introduction to *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance* (1982) stated that history, literature and power dynamics are interrelated since the effect of dominant powers is inevitable on the author. Thus, literary works are shaped under the influence of prepotent factors in the society (Greenblatt, 1982). Therefore, in order to conceive the concept of apostasy in the play *A Christian Turned Turk*, one needs to gain perspective about the historical background of the seventeenth century, so that one can develop an understanding of the general approach towards changing religion.

In his introduction to Greenblatt’s *The Greenblatt Reader*, Payne expresses that “[j]ust as it is no longer tenable to think of a literary text as a detached object that is independent of its author and readers, so also is it no longer possible to think of the past as an object that is detachable from its textual reconstruction” (2005, 3). In this respect, this study aims at providing a critical look towards the play which arouses “scepticism” since there are serious conflicts between the historical facts and the play text when the era is considered. Thus, examining the era and the writer’s interaction with the dynamics of the period will procure a deeper understanding of the play. What Payne claims is that, focusing on the historical data is necessary to develop realistic interpretations of any given text. By centralising history, the new historicists seek to reshape the text in historical discourse, and they do not follow a cause-and-effect strategy for this purpose. Rather, they tend to look for connections between these discourses, the text and the power dynamics belonging to the specific era (Gallagher 1989, 37). In Berghahn’s words:

*New historicists investigate the transitions between cultural documents and their transformation into literature; they ask of a text or part of it not what it means, but how it was integrated. In other words, literary texts do not originate above history, transcending it; they are part of the political, religious and social institutions that form, control and limit them, they do not exist outside of but within the discourses of power. (1992, 144-45)*

Emphasising on the theory’s core point of taking the historical discourse and text as a whole, Berghahn defines new historicism as the unifying force that procures multiple bridges between the text and the institutions that exist in the society. This definition highlights Daborne’s motivation for transforming the existing prejudices in the society into a tragedy that conflicts with the realities.

Especially through the seventeenth century, naming the countries located outside of its borders as other was a common practice in the English society and the Ottoman Empire was not an exception for this abjection. Excluding the different and the distant was one of the reasons that

aroused anxiety towards Turks. As a result, English writers such as Daborne himself, Greene and Massinger often described Turks as people without any identity or ethnic roots and named them as perverts who get prosperous by exploiting other countries. Considering Islam as a false religion, they regarded the expansion of the Ottoman Empire as violence associated with religious fanaticism (Vitkus 2000, 12; 2003, 17). This attitude overall created a negative public opinion among the English society not just towards this particular nation but also towards the surrounding nations who embraced the same religion regardless of their ethnicity. This tendency towards othering what is behind the borders can be exemplified in *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* written by Giles Fletcher in 1597. Fletcher propounds that Koran is “for the most part full stuffed and replenished with vaine and fantastical conceits of feigned dreames apparitions, visions and reuelations” (14). There are also accusations made against the prophet Muhammed in the book degrading his race and lineage. This idea of exalting one’s own religion and degrading the others is quite visible in *A Christian Turned Turk*. There are many references in the play defining Islam as an inferior religion compared to Christianity. This common judgement against Islam and its practitioners is also evident in other plays written during the Renaissance period. There were 47 plays written from 1579 to 1642 about Turks and Ottoman Empire which characterised them as evil, brutal and inferior. Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine* (1587), Thomas Goffe’s *The Raging Turk* (1632) and *The Courageous Turk* (1631), Robert Greene’s *Alphonsus* (1599), George Peele’s *Battle of Alcazar* (1594) and *Soliman and Persida* (1592), Thomas Dekker’s *Lust’s Dominion* (1657), William Rowley’s *All Lost by Lust* (1620), Philip Massinger’s *The Renegado* (1624), Robert Greene’s *Selimus* (1594), were among these plays which misrepresented Turks and Islam. These early modern plays narrate inconsistent and biased events which reveal the prejudiced approach towards Turks and Muslims (Şahiner 2016, 101).

The common approach in these plays was the introduction of the Turks as a source of immorality and heresy. In a way, writing so many plays on Turks is not simply a sign of dislike towards a particular nation. Along with the religion they represented, writing about the Turks also shows the anxiety and fear prevalent in Europe since the Ottoman advance in Europe created a threat to Christian monarchs (Şahiner 2008, 137). Arguing in the same line, Barin states that the demonization and defamation of Muslim Turks may also have “resulted from the relative weakness Europeans felt when they compared their society and army to those of Turks. As a result, even long before Elizabethan England, throughout Europe, Turks were positioned and defined as the “other”, because of their continuous victory in wars, unbeatable wealth, and prosperity” (2010, 43). These prejudices and the deliberate negative images of Turks are rooted in the intentional propagandas against the nation as early as the eleventh century. Starting with the first crusade in 1099, Turks were seen as a threat seizing Anatolia which was called the Holy Lands by the Christian community. To recapture the lost lands from the hands of the heretics, as they called it, the popedom and the monarchs portrayed the Turks as bloodthirsty barbarians contaminating the sacred lands in the hope for fostering their campaign against them (Barin 2010, 41). Therefore, these plays written during the early modern period can be considered as the products of this deliberate campaign.

*A Christian Turned Turk*, as its name suggests, tells the story of Captain Ward, a Christian pirate, who falls in love with a Muslim girl, Voada, and converts in order to marry her. In the play, Ward is portrayed as a man who betrays his country and gives up on his own religion to pursue his lust. Ignoring any other reason that might lead to his conversion, the play solely focuses on his desire or lust for a woman. The playwright, who is certainly among the intellectuals of the society, is indifferent to the reasons behind pirating such as the economic factors that were extremely effective on those who took up piracy. Still, there are signs in the play referring to this

cause. Ward is aware of the fact that he has nothing to lose by converting when his situation is considered. He expresses his ideas as follows:

*What is 't I lose by this my change? My country?  
 Already 'tis to me impossible.  
 My name is scandaled? What is one island  
 Compared to the Eastern Monarchy?  
 (7. 179-182)*

Here, Ward compares his native land to the one he has inhabited, Tunis, pointing to the imbalance of both economic and political power between them. Although Daborne gives the impression that Ward’s reasoning in the above lines is nothing more than an illusion caused by a simple love affair, Ward’s statement is not fanciful. Vitkus expresses that considering the time the play was written, England was facing economic problems as well as plagues and famine whereas the Ottoman Empire was at the peak of its military and economic power. Situated within the borders of the empire, Tunis was also a prosperous state where people from different religions lived together peacefully. Islamic regions were offering the converts an alternative life, one which was simpler and easier, especially for those who experienced economic problems. Ethnic groups under Ottoman rule lived peacefully throughout the centuries. Similarly, “English renegades no longer had to cope with ceaseless attempts of the ecclesiastical authorities to impose uniformity or the general atmosphere of struggle and discontent that afflicted their homeland” (Vitkus 2003, 110). Hence Ward, whose name is already “scandaled” in England, would have nothing to lose but a lot to gain from the riches of Eastern Monarchy.

While the Ottoman Empire was at its peak in terms of both economic and political power, England was not among the richest of the European countries. Throughout the sixteenth century, England was in a constant war with Spain and the power struggles continued even after the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. The relationship with Spain deteriorated especially after the Act of Supremacy, passed in the parliament in 1558 announcing Elizabeth as the supreme head of the church, first accomplished by her father, Henry VIII. Perceiving this as a denial of the Pope, Catholic Spain attacked England with an armada in 1588, a year after Mary, the Queen of Scots’s execution (Tunstall 2019, 61). England had a victory in this marine warfare with the favour of weather conditions, however lost more than six thousand sailors to typhus and starvation for the reason that it could not provide the necessary aid to its forces (Durant and Durant 1961, 37). According to Lord Admiral Charles Howard of Effingham, who led the English ships in the war against the Spanish Armada, the living conditions of English soldiers were so miserable that they “were dying, not of any wounds – there were not a hundred casualties all told on the English side – but of scurvy and typhus, the usual diseases that ravaged sailors” (Rowse 2003, 279).

Contrary to this troublesome period England had been going through, Islamic lands were a source of temptation, alluring non-Muslims to settle down and start a new life. Conversion was considered as a threat by the English since hundreds of people were converting to Islam hoping for better life standards in the Ottoman states. Seeing Turks as a bogeyman, there was a serious anxiety towards the apostasy (Sisneros 2016, 34-36). Conversion to Islam was a growing problem for Christian authorities, and they were searching for ways to prevent it. Church sermons condemned the conversion and encouraged suffering and martyrdom instead of abandoning Christianity (Vitkus 2003, 6). The author, Robert Daborne was a cleric himself, who took the holy orders in 1618. He became the chancellor of Waterford in Ireland in 1619 and prebendary of Lismore in 1620 and was finally appointed as the dean of Lismore in the following year (Phelps,

1980). Even though he wrote *A Christian Turned Turk* in 1612, his later career indicates that he shared those anxieties and had a mission to point out the dangers of apostasy as it gets apparent in the analysis of the play. Schmuck expresses that the play powerfully displays the fear of conversion, perhaps more than any other conversion play of the era. He adds that Ward's conversion is treated as a bigger offense by Daborne, compared to his position as a pirate. The motive behind this aim is clear for Schmuck as he points out that "[t]he didacticism underlying the demonisation of conversion, then, was a response to the perception that a large number of Christians had converted to Islam" (2006, 8). So, contrary to real life account of Ward, Daborne in his play *A Christian Turned Turk*, creates a character who dies contritely, describing himself as a misled soul and blaming the Turks for his bitter end: "Ungrateful curs, that have repaid me thus / For all the service that I have done for you" (16. 297-8). These lines serve to create an example of a renegade who feels disappointment and regret as a result of trusting the "other".

Although Daborne's Ward in the play dies, the real Captain John Ward was alive when the play was published. In the play, Daborne invents a completely different plot ignoring the reality, by which he deliberately misrepresents Islam and Turks. John Ward was born in a fishing town of Faversham when Elizabeth I was still in reign. He, like many others, chose pirating as a profession to be wealthy and later became a captain to Turkish ships. During Elizabeth's reign, pirating was supported and encouraged privately by the court. Although the queen seemed to object piracy, she invested in the pirates and provided them with ships. John Hawkins was among the ones dealing with slave trade, transporting hundreds of Africans to sell as slaves on behalf of England. Another example is Francis Drake who "sailed through the Strait of Magellan, pillaged Spanish towns on the Pacific, reached as far north as San Francisco, crossed to the Philippines, and returned around the Cape of Good Hope; he came back with a million pounds in treasure" (Greenblatt 2012, 19). Elizabeth raised Francis Drake, one of the most famous seamen of the time, to knighthood as a result of his accomplishments in the distant seas. After the death of the queen, king James I was on the throne and the court's approach towards pirates changed completely. Contrary to queen Elizabeth, he took disciplinary actions to prevent piracy and as a result, pirating became illegal. Thus, for pirates, turning back to their hometowns meant to continue living in poverty or to be hanged for piracy. Seeking a formal pardon from the king but unable to get an answer for his calls, Ward converted to Islam and lived as a wealthy man in Tunis (Sisneros 2016, 34). In the play, however, his conversion is attributed to a single cause which is his lust for a woman. Conversion is offered by Voadia as the only way for Ward to quench his lust: "Turn Turk... I am yours" (7. 127). This is a reference to excessive sexuality found in the Western accounts of the east and Islam in general as indeed, "the notion of a veiled, hidden lust masquerades as virtue and chastity is often a characteristic of the Islamic woman in English Renaissance texts" (Vitkus 2000, 14). However, attributing Ward's reason for conversion to lust alone undermines reality drastically and real-life Ward's economic success proves this.

Although Daborne claims the opposite, Ward lived well into his late seventies and probably died in 1623 during a plague spreading in the state. The name, John Ward, became very popular in England especially after his conversion to Islam. As Sisneros explains, "Ward was a national sensation; he was featured in dramas, news, pamphlets, ballads and the subject of a number of sermons and distraught letters back and forth between diplomats across Europe and presented for the English public as both hero and anti-hero" (2016, 34). Daborne's play, on the other hand, "construes his sexual and religious transgression to be the automatic precursor to a tragic downfall punctuated by hopeless repentance, suicide, and eternal damnation" (Degenhardt 2010, 16). Vitkus, however, describes the real-life Ward as an "admirable villain, a paragon of wealth and valour who exemplified the success and autonomy that may be achieved through an unruly

masculine virtue that is willing and able to defy the rules laid down by the Christian authorities” (2010, 26). In the eyes of many English people, Ward was a hero who could escape from poverty and become a wealthy man who owns his private vessels. However, as MacLean puts it “Daborne’s play abandons knowable facts for convenient fictions in order to achieve a demonstrable moral design” (2003, 226). In other words, by conflating facts with fiction Daborne contributes to the defamation of Islam to prevent conversion among Christians.

Ruling from Constantinople that once belonged to the Christians, Ottomans were a threat for the European countries. They called all Muslims as Turks without paying attention to their ethnicity. The name Turk was causing anxiety and fear (MacLean 2007, 2-5). Daborne’s play is an example of hostility towards Islam spreading among the Christians. Conversion was introduced to the public as a horrible act only if it is a matter of abandoning Christianity, not Islam. The Broadside ballads, which were popular among the public, mainly in the sixteenth century and beyond especially after the invention of print in 1472, included stories about Turkish converts. These ballads, instead of criticising, contained a hospitable attitude towards Turks who converted. They were written in the form of verse or songs; and were about recent events or popular themes. As Şahiner states, the ballads were highly effective on the public opinion, and they were used as a tool to arouse a negative image about the Turks and their religion. They often portrayed scenes that showed Turks as cowards, infidels, slothful persons and tyrants without any conscience to be veracious. Since these ballads were accessible by the majority of the English community, they were very effective on the general impression towards Turks (Şahiner 2016, 81-98). The ballad titled “The Turkish Lady”, tells the story of a Turkish girl who falls in love with an English man who is sold to a Turkish lady as a slave. The ballad narrates:

*When we arrived in Turkey,<sup>2</sup>  
That treacherous people for to see,  
It was all our fortunes to be,  
Sold for slaves to a rich lady.  
(lines 17-20)*

The lady offers him freedom in return for turning Turk, but he refuses and choses to live as a slave. After being rejected by the young man, she makes her decision. The poem ends as below:

*She got up and dress’d her in rich array,  
And with this young man did sail away,  
that was bound in chains and bondage too.  
By this you see what true love can do.  
(lines 41-44)*

While the Christian avoids conversion even for his freedom, the lady easily gives up on her own country and faith which is interpreted as a sign of true love. In another ballad titled “Lord Bateman”, a lord named Bateman is put into prison in Turkey and is saved by a Muslim girl, Sophia, who steals the keys of the prison cell. They fall in love and make vows to each other not to marry others. Sometime after he sails home with the ship she gives him, he forgets his vow. On the day of his wedding, Sophia comes to England:

*And when she came to Lord Bateman’s castle  
So boldly now she rang the bell*

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<sup>2</sup> All the ballads are taken from Oxford Broadside Ballad Archive (<http://ballads.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>)

*Who's there? cried the young porter,  
Who's there? - now come unto me tell.*  
(lines 41-44)

Glad about her arrival, Lord Bateman cancels the wedding instantly and marries Sophia. Ballads approach Turkish converts mildly and gently, without any reference to feelings of lust or dishonesty. It appears that the reprimand and disdain intended to arouse in the public towards the converts only work unilaterally to Islam's disadvantage. On the other hand, the picturing of Christian converts is appalling as it is shown in the play. Daborne often uses the chorus as a way of expressing his hatred towards Islam and its followers. The scene from Ward's conversion ritual elaborates this:

*The accursed priests of Mahomet being set,  
Two knights present the wretch, who finds no let  
To his perdition: to whom nor shame, nor fear  
Give any curb.*  
(8. 11-14)

In the dumb show which immediately follows the opening speech of Chorus in Scene 8, the conversion process, invented by Daborne, includes exaggerated actions such as Ward's coming "on an ass" and "spurns", the Mufti who "offers him a cup of wine by the hands of a Christian" which he refuses. Then, the chorus continues:

*they then read  
The laws of their damned prophet. He subscribes,  
Enrols his name into their pagan tribes  
Now wears the habit of a free-born Turk.*  
(8. 15-18)

Here, it is clear that the playwright is inspired by his own imagination while setting the scene, not the reality since none of these rituals for conversion has ever existed in the religion of Muslims. What is more interesting is that Fletcher's work *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597), which gives a rather accurate description of the process of circumcision among Muslims, was already available for Daborne. Yet, he consciously conflates the ritual of circumcision with that of castration to create a terrible vision of what awaits anyone who converts to Islam. Then, he explains the purpose of the play through the chorus which is "to show the world, black deeds will have black ends" (8. 28). Just before the ritual, we hear Ferdinand saying, "no hell I see's so low / Which lust and woman cannot lead us to" (7. 281-82), referring to Ward's precise conversion. In an interesting manner, Daborne turns the text into a didactic work, a sermon perhaps, advising and warning about the perils of forsaking Christian religion. However, he endeavours to manage his aims by despising and disparaging the Turks and their religion rather than by foregrounding the merits of his own.

## Conclusion

The common ground for many plays that were written and staged in the Early Modern period is that they share the same enmity towards Turks and their beliefs. The reason for this enmity was not because they despised or disdained Turks in the same way they did other foreign enemy countries, but because they sensed a mixture of fear and respect towards the Turkish nation. As Şahiner puts it, "[f]or the English theatregoers, then, the Turk was not simply an imaginary 'evil' but a nearing Islamic power threatening both their existence and religion" (2008, 137). Therefore,

it appears that the playwrights had a particular aim when picturing converts with tragic ends at the expense of misinforming their audience and that their aim was the defamation of the Turks and their religion. They depicted Ottoman Sultans as bloodthirsty tyrants and Turkish women as immoral and lustful as in the example of Agar and Voada in the play. Voada tells Agar that “I must enjoy his love, though quenching of my lust did burn the whole world besides” (6. 100-1). Once she convinces Ward to become Turk, she starts behaving differently. In this way, she is pictured as a hypocrite and a deceitful woman who pretends to love Ward only to change his religion. This becomes obvious when, right after the ceremony, she tells Ward that she hates him while she declares that she loves Fidelio. Hence, the play claims that Turkish women are unreliable and dishonest.

Studying the texts from a new historicist perspective helps to reach more reliable conclusions about not only the authors but also the political and cultural dynamics of the period to which those texts belong. Then it becomes possible to claim that they are parts of certain political and religious appropriations of the nations. As it is argued in this study, the tendency for misrepresentation of Turks resulted from the anxiety stemming from the threat towards Christianity. The growing number of English converts to Islam distressed the state and the religious authorities and they accepted defamation as one of the solutions for the problem they faced. Using new historicist approach in the examination of the play necessitated a closer look on the era, the playwright and historical and social facts which overall aided to reach a deeper understanding of the play.

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