Conversions/Conversations: The Language of Religious and Cultural Encounter

Matthew Dimmock and Helen Smith, SAA Seminar Abstracts

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The Color of Conversion in *The Masque of Blacknesse*
Kimberley Ann Coles

Molly Murray has argued that Ben Jonson's *The Masque of Blacknesse* (1605) is a narrative of conversion centered on England's queen, who played a leading role in the masque. Anne was a rumored Catholic convert, and the masque was played at court before her presumed coreligionist, the Spanish ambassador. Murray suggests that the miraculous whitening of the Ethiopian ladies at the end of the masque, through the agency of King James I, was Jonson's message that the queen would be dyed in the colors of the king's devotion. I would instead suggest that the alteration in outward complexion of the queen and her ladies is a demonstration of a change in inward disposition—since skin color is read as the external expression of an internal humoral balance.

Intellectual historians such as Angus Gowland and James Hankins have recently argued that belief itself—the excess, defect, or lack of religion—was apprehended and understood in terms of temperament in the latter part of the sixteenth century. There was a humoral constitution to what Hankins terms the "virtuous mean of 'true religion'." Which religion was the "true" one was a matter of perspective, but the means and methods of attacking religious others on the grounds of their defective physiological disposition had a long tradition on both sides. Jonson graphically portrays the complexion of conversion in his masque—the constitution of the "Catholics" onstage is restored through the virtuous Protestant example of the King of England. Of course, this reading is complicated by the fact that Jonson was a convert to Catholicism at the time of his composition of the masque. We should not, however, regard his hyperbole as a position; we should instead pay attention to the humoral terms of the compliment: "This sunne [James] is temperate, and refines / All things, on which his radiance shines" (269-70). Just as Dudley Carleton, in his infamous remarks regarding the masque performance, perceived significance in the Spanish ambassador's willingness to blacken his hands in dancing with the queen, I expect the king and court to have read a code of color in terms of religious conversion—and, apparently, so too did Jonson.

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The Contrary Languages of Conversion
Matthew Dimmock

This paper will build upon research into the conversion of Muslims (as well as individuals of other religions) to Anglicanism in early modern London. That work has revealed how these specific rituals generate a peculiar and unexpected lexicon of 'conversion'. In such cases the *Book of Common Prayer* is used as the basis for improvised ceremonies that emphasise a process of conversation and conference in opposition to an apparently Roman Catholic-tainted notion of conversion.

This paper will draw on this work to analyse the language used when English writers describe Christians 'turning Turk' in a range of contexts – both literary and non-literary – to

question whether there is a coherent and widely understood lexicon associated with this move. Alongside some relatively conventional dramatic and theological material (including plays by Daborne, Kyd and Shakespeare) I hope to consider petitions, pamphlets, and a little-known letter from the Bishop of London to the Mayor concerning English captives in North Africa and the likelihood of them falling into the 'gulphe of Mahomet'. A key consideration will be the extent to which a language in which Christians 'turn' to Islam in this period either reproduces or rejects the specific terminology associated with conversion from Islam, and the implications of such a language for critical perspectives on the field, particularly those concerning notions of the 'other'.

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"The Tankard Cannot Lye": Alcohol and the Christian-Muslim Connection in William Percy's *Mahomet and His Heaven*
Fatima Ebrahim

In this essay, I examine how William Percy critiques Islam, Catholicism, and law through satire and the theme of alcohol/drinking in *Mahomet and His Heaven* (1601). To be clear, the play does not stage a formal religious conversion (except the brief episode in which Haly renounces his sect of Islam to join Mahomet's). However, it responds to contemporary anxieties of religious conversion by questioning faith itself (including law as a secular alternative). Whereas other "Turk plays" depict Islam as an opposing threat or foil to Christianity, in this play Percy situates Islam on the same plane as Catholicism and law and he connects all three with the theme of drinking/alcohol. In fact it is possible that Percy uses both faiths to represent religion altogether; "the general tone" of the play, as Madeleine Dodds suggests, is that it implies "a criticism of contemporary religion undercover of Islam" (193). By satirizing Islam, Catholicism, and the contemporary legal system, I argue that Percy questions the certainty of knowing the "true" religion. He thus articulates the uncertainty that might arise with religious change through the "language of drinking".

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The Conversion of Pericles
Hannibal Hamlin

In *Pericles*, Shakespeare returns to the Mediterranean geography he first explored in *The Comedy of Errors*, a geography that in both plays mirrors the travels of that apostle Paul as described in the book of Acts and the New Testament epistles. Shakespeare's late Romance thus calls attention to its potential parallels with the biblical Romance in Acts. Critics have noted the importance of Ephesus (and Diana) in both stories, and they share the shipwrecks that Northrop Frye called the standard mode of transportation in Romance; it is perhaps harder to see in Shakespeare anything clearly like Paul's road to Damascus experience. I'm inclined, however, to suggest that "conversion" might be the right word for what Pericles experiences at the end of the play, and also, perhaps, for the effect of the play on the audience -- at least in some secular version of the religious turning. This aligns somewhat with what Richard McCoy has recently proposed as the specifically theatrical, artistic "faith" one experiences in or through Shakespeare's plays, though I resist the New Historicist argument for the theater as a space for "evacuated" religious experience. However genuine the theatrical conversion experience—a conversion that is, for the audience, aesthetic, emotional, even ethical?—this does not impinge upon the

experience of actual religious conversion, but rather borrows from it to achieve a peculiarly dramatic effect.

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"The Strange Indian with the great tool":
Conversion and Temporality in Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII*
Gavin Hollis

In the penultimate scene of Fletcher and Shakespeare's *Henry VIII or All Is True* (1613), the Porter, facing the throng at the christening of Princess Elizabeth (the future Elizabeth I), compares the event to the time when large crowds gathered to witness "the strange Indian with the great tool" and broke out into an uncontrollable, ecstatic frenzy. Shakespeare and Fletcher may have been drawing on chronicle sources that relate the story of the sensational visit of three Brazilians in the reign of Henry VII. The play's first audiences, however, would have thought of present-day American visitors who were ferried across the Atlantic by the Virginia Company to ensure the future of its missionary project, and, perhaps most immediately, of the procession of Virginian Priests that formed part of George Chapman's *The Memorable Masque*, performed only a few months before the opening of *Henry VIII*. *Henry VIII*'s "strange Indian," then, stands as part of chronicle history and an anachronism, a time-traveller from England's recent colonial efforts transported back to its pre-colonial past.

Henry VIII draws on the sermons of religious (and particularly puritan) leaders, who imagined the conversion of the Indians in eschatological terms, that is, that through the conversion of the Indians the war between Protestantism and Catholicism in Europe would reach its final phase. But Fletcher and Shakespeare do not simply reflect these influences: in *Henry VIII* the Indian unsettles questions in colonialist propaganda and sermons as to whether the conversion project in Virginia had any future and whether the Protestant "end of days" would ever come to pass. By so doing, the play leaves open the question as to whether England had had its own recent great moment of conversion, the Reformation, and whether that promise was unfulfilled, even in the 1610s. In *Henry VIII* the Indian stands less as the herald asserting a Protestant futurity than a figure troubling the possibility of asserting a Protestant past.

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Name as a conversion keyword:
Notes towards a vocabulary of Religion, Culture, and Materiality
Kathleen Lynch

For my contribution to the SAA seminar discussion, I am going to accept the directors' invitation to move towards a somewhat less traditional form. That is to outline a key concept or term. For me, for the purposes of this discussion, that key concept is a name. I will present several vignettes of conversion that highlight the significance of the baptismal name taken by an adult convert. I'll collect examples from within and without early modern drama, within and without the English nation. On one hand, I will turn to the significance of the naming of cross-cultural converts. Examples include the well-known Pocahontas-turned-Rebecca and the lesser known baptism of a Micmac leader and his family with the names of members of the French royal family. How are the scriptural and patronage evocations deployed in these instances? What analogues do we find in the drama of the period? I want also to extend consideration of the significance of a name to internecine battles for the Christian souls of English men and women (such as the curious list of converts from Catholicism that Archbishop Laud felt compelled to include in his defense at his Parliamentary trial). Here, the aristocratic names have a different

function altogether. There is no change of name required, but rather a certification of influence and status connections.

Crude ethnic and denominational signifiers also figure into the vocabulary of naming, perhaps more than the selection of (or acceptance of) a newly given personal name. I want to raise some issues around those communal identities, as well. What pressure do they put on a changed personal name? How do they maintain doubt and uncertainty about a changed heart? In compiling examples of a vocabulary of names, I am returning to issues of etymology, but also raising questions of intertextuality, patronage networks, and materiality. How, and under what generic circumstances, is a name registered in writing? To conclude with another echo of critical work, I hope that a series of vignettes focused on the semantics of names, both personal and communal, will allow us to raise the question with which Denise Riley titled her study of feminism and the category of women's history: Am I that name?

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Leaving It All: *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Protestant Individualism, and Self-Denial
Patrick John McGrath

John Bunyan and his work have often been read as illustrating the new importance that interiority and the individual came to have in early modern England. Stuart Sim definitively asserts, "*The Pilgrim's Progress* is very much a celebration of individualism."[1] Roger Lundin also stresses the allegory's capacity to affirm individuality: "John Bunyan was one of those 'ordinary English men' who possessed an extraordinary gift for giving voice to what Charles Taylor has called that 'inexhaustible inner domain' of the self that was discovered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."[2] Bunyan has also been connected to the way in which Reformation practices helped facilitate the discovery of this inner domain. By placing biblical interpretation into the hands of each individual believer and decreasing mediation between him and God, some argue that the Reformation helped to champion a new sense of self. "Protestants in general," David L. Jeffrey maintains, "have usually presented individualism—even in biblical interpretation—as pretty much an unmitigated good."[3] Jeffrey then adduces Bunyan's comments about interpreting the Bible as exemplary of this good. Despite the ways in which Bunyan has been seen to reflect the individualistic Protestant self, there have been critiques of too closely associating him with it. For instance, J.C. Davis contends that in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) an autonomous subject is difficult to find, and Roger Pooley posits that subjection, as opposed to the subject, is an apt term to describe identity in the autobiography.[4] Thomas H. Luxon offers a subtle and complex account of how Bunyan and Reformed Christianity are "incessantly about the business of othering" and that they even other the self.[5] This essay contributes to the work of Davis, Pooley, and Luxon in problematizing the notion of Bunyan and individualism by proposing the integral importance of self-denial to *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This does not mean, though, that the self is unimportant to Bunyan, and puritanism more generally. A process of self-denial that attempts to extirpate subjectivity cannot help but manifest an avid interest in the self, intensely scrutinizing every instance of interiority. But the consequence of that interest is not a celebration of the individual. The importance of the self deriving from a

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[1] John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (Hertfordshire, 1996), xii.
[2] John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress* (New York, 1964; rev. 2002), xiv.
[3] David L. Jeffrey, *House of the Interpreter: Reading Scripture, Reading Culture* (Waco, 2003), 6.
[4] J.C. Davis, "Living with the Living God: Radical Religion and the English Revolution," in Christopher Durston and Judith D. Maltby (eds.), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), 19-41, 31-5; Roger Pooley, "*Grace Abounding* and the New Sense of Self," in Anne Laurence, W.R. Owens, and Stuart Sim (eds.), *John Bunyan and His England, 1628-88* (London, 1990), 105-14, 106.
[5] Thomas H. Luxon, *Literal Figures: Puritan Allegory and the Reformation Crisis in Representation* (Chicago, 1995), 26.

desire to obliterate it stands in stark contrast to the unabashed individualism so often found in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan's allegory advocates this obliteration for, as I will argue, his ascetic thought consists of a particularly acute form of self-denial.

This paper, then, understands "conversion" more largely, as not just applying to a moment of justification, but a process of sanctification the justified individual undergoes throughout his/her lifetime. Drawing on Bunyan, Baxter, and the extensive puritan literature on self-denial, I hope to show how intertwined self-denial and sanctification are, and in so doing complicate a too easy equation of Protestantism and individualism.

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"That grieves me most":
On Confession and Subversion in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*.
Jamie Paris

As she is about to die, Abigall asks Friar Barnardine for his attention so that she can confess how she offended "high heaven so grievously" that she is "almost desperate for [her] sins" (3.6.7-8). What she goes on to confess, however, is not her own sin, but the plot that her father, Barabras, used to get Don Lodowick and Mathias to kill each other because they were "jealous of [her] love" (3.6.27). Friar Barnardine finds this plot to be a work of "monstrous villainy" (3.6.30), but Abigall pleads with him not to break the confessional seal: "[t]o work my peace, this I confess to thee. / [r]eveal it not, for then my father dies" (3.6.31-32). With her last breath Abigall proclaims a compound wish that her father might be converted "that he may be saved" (3.6.39) and she asks the Friar, and the audience, to "witness that [she dies] a Christian" (3.6.40). On its own the moment is touching. Friar Barnadine subverts the mood of the scene, however, by debasing Abigall and implying that her primary value was not as a Christian but as a potential sexual conquest: "[a]y, and a virgin, too, that grieves me most" (3.6.41). As if to further undercut this moment of potential love and forgiveness, the Friar's next reflection is that he must use what he has learned in shrift to "exclaim on [Barabras] / [a]nd make him stand in fear of me" (3.6.42-43). It is as if the Friar's hatred of Barabras, who he refers to only as "the Jew" (3.6.42), is greater than any potential hope or pity for Abigall.

This paper represents a methodological blending of the turn to religion in early modern studies (Jackson and Marotti 2004; 2011) with the turn to affect. This paper will situate the failures of forgiveness in *The Jew of Malta* within the larger rituals of forgiveness and conversion in the *Book of Common Prayer* ([1559] 2011). It will pay attention to failed and frustrated moments of conversion and incorporation in Marlowe's play, and it will contrast Barabas's increasing anger and isolation with Abigall's conversion, and the ways in which her confessional identity as a converted Christian is subverted within the play. What might the contrasts between Barabas's counterfeit conversion and Abigall's seemingly genuine conversion tell us about the affective role of conversion in the early modern imaginary?

This paper comes from my dissertation, where I argue that the early modern theatre and the church were both concerned with keeping the attention of their audiences; one of the ways that dramatic interest in Christopher Marlowe's and William Shakespeare's plays was generated by staging interrupted, failed or parodic confessions, prayers, and sermons. In particular, I will argue that when the characters in Marlowe's and Shakespeare's tragedies fail to find solace in acts that model reformed devotional practices they suffer the strange but dramatically engaging consequences of tragic passions like despair, hatred, jealousy, fear, and rage. This dissertation, then, will bridge the turn to religion and affect studies as a means of arguing that early modern tragedy was consumed with attracting, and sustaining, the dramatic attention of the audience.

The Art of Convers(at)ion
Tessie Prakas

This paper focuses largely on texts from Thomas Traherne's *Centuries of Meditations* and *Thanksgivings*. Traherne is one of several early modern authors who incorporated vocal exchanges central to ecclesiastical ritual into their verse, using a variety of creative strategies, as a basis for generating elaborate forms of devotion that were ultimately quite separate from the church. "A Thanksgiving and Prayer for the Nation," for example, includes a lengthy list of secular institutions that resembles those in the ministerial intercessions of the Anglican Morning Service, intercessions that would typically be punctuated with congregational responses. In Traherne's poem, though, there is no such responsive structure, and the list stands out against a backdrop of more florid, extensive invocation than is common in the ecclesiastical intercessions. While the link with these intercessions suggests that the poem's speaker is ministerial, the lack of explicit scripting also makes this into a meditative outpouring that can put any devout individual— clerical or lay—into conversation with the divine.

Alongside such instances when the reading process involves imagining ecclesiastical utterance, this paper will study moments when Traherne describes the act of reading as leading to a more decidedly textual kind of conversation. In particular, it will consider Traherne's epigraph to the *Centuries*, in which he urges the dedicatee herself to write manuscript additions into the work as a means of religious self-advancement. I hope to read this dedication, alongside certain formal devices used within the texts, as an invitation to a form of conversation with the author, and ultimately with divine entities, that will assist intellectual and spiritual conversions on the part of the reader. These conversions do not involve a shift across confessional boundaries, but they nonetheless require significant changes, changes that Traherne often describes using the terminology of religious affiliation.

"A change in the complexion of the mind": Racial Transformation and Religious Conversion in Middleton's *The Triumphs of Honor and Vertue*
Gitanjali Shahani

In 1622, Middleton's *The Triumphs of Honor and Vertue*, a pageant for the Lord Mayor's show, introduces with much fanfare, the figure of a black Indian Queen. Part of a larger tableau in which different figures come into the streets of London to perform exemplary mercantile values, the Queen is an opening device in Middleton's masque. This "black personage representing India" is carried in on a bed of spices by Indians dressed in "antique habit". She speaks briefly, only to testify to the fairness of the English trading in her land: she offers them spices; in turn they offer her Christianity. Her speech is in an interesting study in fair trade agreements: a case of spices for salvation, a bargain made possible by English merchants rather than missionaries. Her brief, but elaborate rituals of racial and religious conversion will be the focus of this paper. Part of a larger project on the early modern spice trade, this essay will examine the nuances of the Queen's conversion in terms of seventeenth century anxieties about English encounters in the East Indies, particularly the Spice Islands. I am especially interested in the humoral and corporeal implications of the queen's self-professed change in "the complexion of the mind." How does her Christian conversion effect a change in her complexion? How, in the process, does she shed her "native dye"? What are the contradictions inherent in a dye that is

"native", yet seemingly external and mutable? And how does the English merchant achieve for her the proverbially impossible task of washing the Ethiop white?

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'Come to our House!': The Architecture of Conversion in Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*
Abigail Shinn

This paper will explore the relationship between religious conversion and the conversion of Catholic buildings to secular or Protestant use following the Reformation. Looking at a number of literary and non-literary sources, but focusing primarily on the conversion of the Jew Barabas' house into a nunnery in Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* (1633 – first performed 1592), I will argue that Marlowe's play is attuned to the shifting architecture of sacred spaces in the post-Reformation English landscape. Drawing on the work of James Shapiro, Alexandra Walsham and Andrew Spicer this will constitute an interdisciplinary reading of religious conversion as material transformation, a phenomenon which encompasses monasticism, re-building, adaptation, iconoclasm and recycling. The aim will be to complicate our understanding of the spiritual and confessional kinetics of conversion by aligning them with the material processes of architectural change.

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'May I be so converted?': Much ado about love
Helen Smith

In Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, Benedick quizzes himself about the possibility that he might become a lover: 'May I be so converted and see with these eyes? I cannot tell; I think not: I will not be sworn, but love may transform me to an oyster; but I'll take my oath on it, till he have made an oyster of me, he shall never make me such a fool'. Later in the play, Margaret tells Beatrice 'how you may be converted I know not, but methinks you look with your eyes as other women do'. My paper takes these two unwilling 'converts' as its starting point, asking how the language of religious transformation might be 'converted' to other purposes, and what the relationship is between the religious convert and the convert to love. The paper will explore the subtle ways in which the terms of religious transformation (from nun's vows to 'turning Turk') recur and are themselves transformed throughout the play, and the extent to which these changes of state depend upon sociable 'conversation'. I will ask how far the rapid-fire punning of the wits and their associates carries with it the freight of religious meaning, and explore the kinds of social - and dramatic - currency possessed by the terms of apostasy, schism, and conversion.

Bringing the play into conversation with a range of contemporary texts, I will go on to explore a small sample of loving 'converts', investigating the extent to which these 'conversions' rely, as Margaret and Benedick both suggest, upon visual experience. The paper will ask what kinds of identity formation or transformation are effected through intense feeling (or at least through the language of intense feeling), and how these models coincide with or depart from post-Reformation models of conversion. Finally, I will explore whether religious sensation inheres in or is satirised or deracinated through accounts of loving 'conversion', and how far these secular metamporphoses are informed by, and in turn inform, the discourse and dynamics of devotional love. In so doing, this paper both draws upon and complicates recent accounts of romantic love that emphasise the physiological and cultural effects of 'love-sickness', arguing with Sara Ahmed, for both emotion and conversion as a 'turning towards' and orientation.

**Race and the Confession of Sincerity in *Titus Andronicus*'s Aaron:
Exploring the Theatrical Metaphysics of Personhood**
Matthew J. Smith

Centering especially on Caliban, postcolonial criticism in Shakespeare studies has comprised a substantial bibliography of work on the rhetorical and epistemological functions of characters of color on stage. Caliban has been described as "double colonized," first, by the colonizers of the Africans and Americans reflected in Caliban and, second, by what Spivak has called the epistemological reach of imperialism, Caliban's confinement to the vocabulary of his captivity. Though he has received much less attention than Caliban, *Titus Andronicus*'s Aaron is also double colonized by the racially coded language of his dispossession and relocation. In particular, the epistemic reach of Aaron's captivity comes through in his anti-confession: his effusive list of "heinous deeds" delivered in a quasi-ceremonial manner, as a kind of citation to voluntary auricular confession.

Adding the historical context of Christian confession to that of the early modern theatrical performance of blackness significantly magnifies and complicates Aaron's place among the Calibans and Barabases of the Elizabethan stage *namely* because a scene of confession, such as Shakespeare also gives to *Hamlet*'s Claudius and perhaps at the end of *The Tempest* and other late plays, introduces wholly new contingencies of personhood and one's performance of sincerity. Aaron's performance of anti-confession applies not only perceptual qualities of sincerity, honesty, and motive to a racialized character who is often read as thoroughly duplicitous, but it also applies the popular theological valences of contrition and penance to a character whose coherence of inner state and outer appearance is already written in his skin, as Jane Taylor puts it: "Aaron in the end has no choice but to be sincere—his inside is written on the surface of his skin."

Specifically, as represented in the proliferation of vernacular prayer books in sixteenth-century England, Protestant theology of confession dramatically shifted focus from the transaction of forgiveness to the presentation and feeling of repentance. As Debora Shuger has shown, this transition stems from the emergence of a soteriology of the person (justice *in personam*), as opposed to a theology of sins (justice *in rem*). The effect was that the confessant's primary responsibility—beyond form, restitution, or priestly absolution—was to present herself as sincere, as coherent in mind and speech, as legibly qualified for forgiveness by virtue of personhood rather than action. And while scholars have begun to explore the inevitably performative—as in "behavioral"—outgrowth of such theology, the question of performative sincerity becomes all the more complex when the confession is doubly performative, that is, staged in the playhouse. At its core, this paper is interested in the metaphysical operations of theater at the intersection of race and confession. In Aaron's case, we begin by observing that part of his double colonization is his unique ability—unique among the Claudiuses of Shakespeare's plays—to present himself as utterly sincere in his evil, empowered by the colonial coding of dark-skin-dark-soul. How is the theater of *Titus Andronicus* extending the epistemological implications of the emergent Protestant theology of confession? And does this metaphysics of theatrical personhood in the person of Aaron reinforce or expose his colonization?

Converting the Ocean
Ameer Sohrawardy

My paper will focus on texts that describe and depict Anglo-Ottoman and Euro-Ottoman nautical conversions. A few scaffolding questions will guide my research: 1) When European captives were employed (or conscripted into service) as navigators aboard Ottoman ships, what types of conversions needed to take place? 2) Did European travelers measure distances, choose travel routes, consult astronomical markers, live as citizens-of-the-sea in ways similar to Ottoman travelers? 3) If they did not, what conversions needed to take place in order for European and Ottoman travelers to co-exist and even profit aboard the same vessel?

I will draw from travel accounts (often translated into English) found in both Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* and Samuel Purchas' *Purchas His Pilgrimage*. I will also turn to passages that describe nautical travel to and through shared waterways in Ottoman oceanographer Piri Reis's 1513 *Kitab-I Bahriye* and historian, Ali ibn Husayn's *Muhit*. Reis's work was the most influential Ottoman guidebook for nautical travel in the Mediterranean in the 16th century. And the *Muhit* was a comprehensive work on oceanography (with special reference to the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Gulf, and the Red Sea). Both Reis and Husayn drew heavily from European sources. But at the same time, both also provided uniquely non-European perspectives on nautical travel and oceanic life. Husayn's compilation is the only source for otherwise-unknown maps and illustrations drawn by Arab navigators of the 16th century. And Reis's text is rich in vernacular passages whose translation still poses tantalizing problems today. [6]

My paper will also hypothesize reasons why nautical conversions have received so little critical attention, even in discussions of popular plays that putatively beg for such attention. Critics have commented separately on religious, linguistic, and treasonous conversions in plays like *The Fair Maid of the West, Thomas Stukeley*, and *A Christian Turn'd Turk*. And yet, the oceanic setting and the nautical conversions that often accompany the aforementioned conversions have been largely disregarded. I shall ask why this is so and shall proffer some suggestions for redress, in the process suggesting how and why these plays should be considered under a common discussion of nautical conversion.

Delimiting the ocean is a work of culture and of the imagination, not merely of calculation and terrestrial politics. The way the ocean resists this, and human responses to this resistance, is as important to recognize as the ways in which we use the ocean to define ourselves.

Willing Conversion:
Navigating Will and Gender in *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Christian Turned Turk*
Dyani Johns Taff

In this paper, I examine maritime metaphors in William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1600) and Robert Daborne's *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612) that figure the characters' multiple, competing desires and conflicting conceptions of will and gender. Each play stages a conversion—to Christianity and to Islam, respectively—for love, and presents characters who struggle to define the unstable, paradoxical relationship between human and divine will as they approach the moment of conversion. I argue that the maritime metaphors in these plays illuminate the potential convert's competing desires to become a vessel for divine will and to

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[6] Reis has numerous passages describing unique ways of measuring distances. Describing the location of one particular freshwater source off the Sicilian Coast, Reis advises his neophyte reader, "if one shouted on a calm day, the scream would be audible on the Kalavri coast." (377) On the island of Minorca, to the eastern side of the harbor of Portori, Reis writes, "there is a natural spring that gushes forth from the base of a fig tree." (404)

assert his or her will's efficaciousness in bringing about the conversion. Because Shakespeare and Daborne employ maritime metaphors to describe both male and female characters, they disrupt the misogyny of the woman-as-ship metaphor—a common joke in Renaissance drama. In *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, Graziano compares both Jessica and Lorenzo to either a young sailor *or* a "scarfèd barque," which sails at the mercy of the "strumpet wind." His metaphor destabilizes the situation of control both in their marriage and in Jessica's desired conversion. In *A Christian Turned Turk*, Benwash and the Governor figure Voada as a ship that bears their desires to gull Ward as cargo, but Voada herself describes Ward as a sinking ship over which she ultimately has control. The maritime metaphors in these plays both re-inscribe and confound early modern conceptions of men as active and pilot-like and women as passive and ship-like. Mercantile and maritime ventures, romantic pursuit, and religious conversion intersect in these plays, and the characters' contests with religious and cultural others reveal an unstable cross-identification of theological and erotic conceptions of the will in representations of conversion.

So Strange an Alteration: Mary Magdalen and the Queer Phenomenology of Conversion
Bronwyn V. Wallace

In John 20, Mary Magdalen stands alone at the empty tomb of Christ, weeping. Having In John 20, following Christ's resurrection, Mary Magdalen arrives at the tomb with John and Peter, who promptly flee. 'But Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping' (20:11). Unlike the synoptic gospels, John leaves Mary alone there by the empty tomb, and leaves her there for some time, fixed in place by her loss and her confusion. When Christ finally arrives, she does not recognize him – it is not until he *says her name* that realization dawns: 'Jesus saith to her: Mary. She turning, saith to him: Rabboni (which is to say, Master)' (20:16). In this scene of divine interpellation, Mary *turns* from bereft longing toward the plenitude of perfect presence – as Robert Southwell describes it in *Mary Magdalen's Funeral Tears* (1591), her mourning is reconstituted as intimacy, an intimacy that transforms her in what Southwell calls 'so strange an alteration […] as if she had been wholly new made when she was only named.' But in the next verse, the prohibition of touch comes so abruptly and so starkly that it disorients centuries of commentators: 'Jesus saith to her: Do not touch me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father' (20:17). There is another turn to come – he dispatches her to go and tell the other disciples of the resurrection, and she goes. The interpellative scene of the turn moves into her commission as *apostola apostolorum* – it sets her on a new path, directs her into a new orientation toward the community, a new relationship to the apparent absence of Christ from the world.

This paper takes up Sara Ahmed's argument in *Queer Phenomenology* (2006) that desire and embodiment are constituted in *orientation* – in a bodily disposition in space – in order to address Mary's turn in this transformative scene. I am interested in this turn because it tells us that her disposition toward Christ is anchored in the disposition of her *body*. As a *turn* it has in the most literal sense an important resonance with conversion – not a change from one faith to another, but a constitutive transformation foundational to faith itself. But this paper's primary concern will be less with the mechanics of that turn than with the conditions that prepare for it – with the configuration in the commentary tradition of desire and its dilation in the time of reading. I will sketch here some readings of Southwell and of a sixth-century homily of Gregory the Great's, which both dwell at length in the affective conditions of Mary's eventual turn from loss to possession, from absence to presence. If, as Ahmed argues, erotic orientation is conditioned by what lies to hand – what is within reach, and how bodies extend themselves in reaching, how, in other words, the body is moved by desire, then these conditions of Mary's desire are crucial to understanding her eventual *turn*. Her 'orientation,' in other words, is as much about the disabling period of static mourning and incoherence that precedes Christ's arrival as it is about her

eventual turn toward him. For both Southwell and Gregory, Mary's desire for and eventual finding of communion with Christ provide a model of affect in *interpretation* that has something valuable to teach us both about the histories of erotic religions devotion and about our own practices as literary critics, about our own desiring dispositions toward the texts we read.

<center>❧</center>

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