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| Newberry Seminar |
| Playwrights and Apostates |
| Individuality, Conversion and the Interfaith Marriage in Early Modern English Drama |
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“It is not love, but strong libidinous will

That triumphs o’r me; and to satiate that,

What difference 'twixt this Moor and her fair dame?

Night makes their hues alike, their use is so:

Whose hand is so subtle he can colours name,

If he do wink, and touch ‘em? lust, being blind,

Never in women did distinction find.”

Mountferrat, *A Knight of Malta* 1.1; 73

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| ABSTRACT: This paper discusses a small group of English plays from the early seventeenth century that produced images of Turkish figures and culture from the eyes of the Englishman. Past analyses of these “Turk plays” have focused on the image of the Turk or the English renegade. My analysis, however, examines the plays’ characterizations of Turkish and English identity as they meet within interfaith marriages and heterosexual relationships. I argue that the plays empowered individuals by claiming that their actions within the interfaith marriage had consequences on an international scale. This empowerment, in turn, redefined English notions of masculinity and empire. In my analysis, I use close readings of three plays while maintaining a historicist approach to reconstruct broader attitudes in seventeenth-century England. This paper will be useful to those interested in English representations of Islam, English representations of femininity, and the cultural context of interfaith marriage. |