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## **Playing the Pirate, Playing the Jew: Refiguring the Other(s) on the Early Modern English Stage**

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### **Abstract**

This paper studies the figure of the pirate and the Jew as evidenced on the early modern English stage. More specifically, it examines the representation of the English pirate, John Ward and his relation with the “renegado Jew”, Benwash in Robert Daborne’s play, *A Christian Turned Turk* (1612). While the play has been exhaustively studied in recent years to explore English attitudes towards Islam and the treatment of piracy, I argue that it also deserves to be considered for its treatment of its Jewish characters. Noting that Benwash is, in some respects, *sui generis* among all the Jewish characters in early modern English drama since he is shown as formally converted to Islam and yet following Jewish customs, the paper draws on a number of similarities between pirates, renegades and Jews, the trifecta of early modern bogeymen perceived as having abandoned all national and religious identity, but constituting self-centred groups devoted to their own welfare. By drawing attention to the numerous points where the actions of the Jew and pirate are merged in this drama, I argue that the Jew acts as a lens through which the action of the pirates could be held up to scrutiny and helps to recalibrate concepts of monarchy, statehood, religion and class at a time when Englishmen were caught up in the flux of national, social and religious hybridity.

**Keywords:** Pirate, Jews, Turk, Renegade, Conversion.