



Islamic Conversion and Christian Resistance on the Early Modern Stage

Jane Hwang Degenhardt

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This book explores the threat of Christian conversion to Islam in twelve early modern English plays. In works by Shakespeare, Marlowe, Massinger, and others, conversion from Christianity to Islam is represented as both tragic and erotic, as a fate worse than death and as a sexual seduction. Degenhardt examines the stage's treatment of this intercourse of faiths to reveal connections between sexuality, race, and confessional identity in early modern English drama and culture. In addition, she shows how England's encounter with Islam reanimated post-Reformation debates about the embodiment of Christian faith. As Degenhardt compellingly demonstrates, the erotics of conversion added fuel to the fires of controversies over Pauline universalism, Christian martyrdom, the efficacy of relics and rituals, and even the Knights of Malta.

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