

## “A Foe to All Christians”: The Notorious English Corsair Captain and Ottoman Reis John Ward in Early Seventeenth Century English Literature

“Tüm Hıristiyanların Düşmanı”: Erken Dönem 17. Yüzyıl İngiliz Edebiyatında İngiliz Korsan Kaptan ve Osmanlı Reisi John Ward

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### Abstract

*Privateering in England, permitting private ships to attack enemy merchant ships and confiscate their crew and goods was only ‘legally’ possible under a licence known as a ‘letter of marque’, commissioned by a sovereign. In the Elizabethan Period (1558-1603), it proved to be an effective and less expensive way of dealing with Catholic Spain, especially during the Spanish War (1585-1603). When King James I ended the war with Spain in 1604, however, privateers such as John Ward –left without valid licenses– had to find other means of support. Under these new circumstances, the former Captain John Ward first became a pirate, and then a Barbary corsair (Yusuf Reis) and Muslim operating from Tunis. This study will provide a survey of early seventeenth century texts in English literature that deal with the English-Ottoman ‘pirate’ John Ward, someone who has been both glorified and condemned in literary texts. In this respect, early seventeenth century ballads, Samuel Rowlands’ poems, and Robert Daborne’s play *A Christian turn’d Turke* (1610-1612) focusing on Ward will be examined in the light of two pamphlets claiming to be providing “true” reports of his proceedings, Andrew Barker’s *A true and certaine report of the beginning, proceedings, overthrowes, and now present estate of Captaine Ward and Danseker* (1609) and the anonymous *Newes from Sea, of Two Notorious Pirates Ward the Englishman and Danseker the Dutchman* (1609). It will be argued that, apart from the imaginary ballad “Ward and the Rainbow”, Ward’s literary representation has been largely dominated by the aforementioned two pamphlets, as well as political and moral concerns.*

**Keywords:** *John Ward, Andrew Barker, Newes from Sea, Piracy, Seventeenth Century English Literature*

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## Öz

İngiltere’de, özel gemilerin düşman gemilerine saldırıp, gemi, mürettebat ve ganimetlerine el koymalarına olanak tanıyan ‘lisanslı korsancılık’ ancak bir hükümdarın verdiği korsanlık beratı ile mümkündür. Kraliçe Elizabeth’in hükümdarlığında (1558-1603) ‘lisanslı korsancılık’, özellikle İspanyol Savaşı sırasında (1585-1603) Katolik İspanya ile mücadele etmenin etkili ve hesaplı bir yolu olarak görülmüştür. Ancak, Kral I. James’in tahta geçmesiyle 1604 yılında İspanya ile barış sağlanarak, düşmanlara saldırmak üzere verilen izinler iptal edilmiştir. İngiliz Kaptan-Korsan John Ward’ın gibi daha önce ‘lisanslı korsan’ statüsünde olan denizciler, bu yeni düzen içinde kendilerine yer bulamayarak ekonomik sıkıntıya düşmüşlerdir. Ward, bunun üzerine önce korsan, sonra da Hıristiyanları bozguna uğratan bir Osmanlı ‘korsanı’ (Yusuf Reis) ve Müslüman olmuştur. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, 17. yüzyıl başlarında İngiliz Edebiyatında İngiliz-Osmanlı ‘korsanı’ Ward’ı konu alan, onu hem yücelten hem de kınayan edebi eserlerin bir derlemesini sunmaktır. Bu doğrultuda, 17. yüzyılın başlarında yazılmış İngiliz baladları, Samuel Rowlands’ın şiirleri ve Robert Daborne’un *A Christian Turne’d Turke* (1610-1612) adlı oyunu, Ward’ın eylemleriyle ilgili “gerçek” bir rapor oldukları iddia edilen Andrew Barker’ın *A true and certaine report of the beginning, proceedings, overthrowes, and now present estate of Captaine Ward and Danseker* (1609) ve anonim *Newes from Sea, of Two Notorious Pirates Ward the Englishman and Danseker the Dutchman* başlıklı kitapçıklar ışığında değerlendirilecektir. Ward’ın hayal gücüne dayanan “Ward and the Rainbow” başlıklı balad (veya balat) dışındaki edebi temsilinin, büyük bir ölçüde, söz konusu iki kitapçıkta var olan yaklaşım ve siyasi ile ahlaki kaygılar doğrultusunda şekillendiği görülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *John Ward, Andrew Barker, Newes from Sea, Piracy, Korsanlık, 17. yy İngiliz Edebiyatı.*

“Go home, go home!” cried Captain Ward, “Tell your king from me:  
Though he reigns king on all dry land I’ll reign king on the sea!”

As the above extract from the seventeenth century English ballad “John Ward and the Rainbow” relates, Captain John Ward (1553-1622), Jack Ward, or Yusuf Reis, also known by the nicknames ‘Birdy’, ‘Sharky’ and ‘Sparrow’<sup>2</sup>, was an important figure in both Jacobean and Ottoman naval history relating to the Mediterranean. Ward was a captain in the greatest age of English privateering, which proved to be an effective and less expensive means of dealing with Catholic Spain (Fuchs 2000: 45), but this all changed with the accession of King James I of England (1603). A royal decree issued by the new king brought an end to privateering and left many British mariners like John Ward –without a ‘letter of marque’ or valid licenses giving them leave to capture enemy merchant ships and confiscate their goods had to find other means of support. This twist of fate would turn this ordinary captain “into the infamous corsair Captain John Ward of Tunis”, the “greatest scoundrel that ever sailed from England” (Bak 1609: 27). He was forced to enlist aboard the *Lion’s Whelp*, a Royal Navy vessel, but took his destiny to his own hands by choosing to steal a bark belonging to a Catholic recusant and sailing to Barbary ports with his crew. Since the Ottoman Empire presented various opportunities for those who sought employment and advancement (Coles 1968: 54-77), Ward first became an Ottoman<sup>3</sup> citizen (giving him a ‘legal’ status) and privateer, and later a Muslim following his failed attempt to acquire a royal pardon from King James I. Thus, for the English, Ward was considered a pirate<sup>4</sup> and traitor. In *The Life and Crimes of John Ward* (2006), however, Bak has indicated that Ward’s ‘status’ as pirate, corsair or privateer has generally been misunderstood:

“[...] Ward has almost invariably been described as an English pirate. This characterization follows a blinkered logic: if Ward is considered as an English citizen, a subject of James I, then his actions at sea most assuredly were piracy. While there were many European captains, including Britons,

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2 Certain newspapers and popular magazines, rather than academic publications, have put forth claims that Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean* has been based on John Ward due to his nickname ‘Sparrow’. The most recent example is Giles Milton, “John Ward: the real Captain Jack Sparrow”, BBC History Revealed Nov 2019. Online [Viewed 3 January 2020]

3 For a general study of Ottoman pirates see. Emrah Safa Gürkan (2018). *Sultanın Korsanları*, İstanbul: Kronik Kitap.

4 Someone attacking enemy ships (for private purposes) with a mandate from one’s government was considered a privateer while a person lacking such a permit was viewed as a pirate. See. Barbara Fuchs, “Faithless Empires: Pirates, Renegades, and the English Nation”, *ELH*, 67.1, Spring 2000, p. 46.

who worked as pirates from various ports of Ottoman North Africa, John Ward's arrangements at Tunis were categorically different from theirs. Before Ward became an Ottoman privateer, he became an Ottoman subject. Christian pirate or Muslim privateer: it is not just a matter of perspective; it is also a question of legal status." (Bak 2006: 65)

According to this point of view, Ward should be regarded as both an English and Ottoman privateer, apart from a few years of actual 'freelance' pirating. On the other hand, it is his status as a 'corsair', his decision to become an Ottoman citizen and Muslim, his capture of Christian ships in the Mediterranean and the general belief that he had taught the Ottomans the naval technology of Europe which led to his dominantly notorious reputation in English literature. Many early seventeenth century texts with historical or fictional contexts allude to Ward in order to demonstrate the tragic ends of Christian renegades, and plead to all Christians to unite against the common enemy, the Ottoman Turks.

This study aims to provide a survey of early seventeenth century English texts that deal with Ward in order to foreground two different inclinations: glorification of his position and wealth, and condemnation of his proceedings for political, religious, or personal purposes. In this respect, it will begin by giving details about Ward's life and conduct with reference to two important pamphlets that formed his reputation and served as sources for oral and literary works on Ward, namely Andrew Barker's *A true and certaine report of the beginning, proceedings, overthrowes, and now present estate of Captaine Ward and Danseker, the two late famous pirates from their first setting forth to this present time* (1609), and the anonymous *Newes from Sea, of Two Notorious Pirates Ward the Englishman and Danseker the Dutchman. With a true relation of her all or the most piracies by them committed unto the sixth of April 1609* (1609)<sup>5</sup>. From this point on, the representation of Ward will be traced in three early seventeenth century ballads "Seamens Song of Captain Ward, the famous Pyrate of the World, and an Englishman born" (1609), "The Seamans Song of Dansekar the Duchman, his robberies done at Sea" (1609) and "Ward and the Rainbow" (early 17<sup>th</sup> C.), Samuel Rowlands' two poems "The Picture of a Pirat[e]" (1612-13) and "To a Reprobate Pirat that hath renounced Christ and is Turn'd Turke" (1612-13), and Robert Daborne's play *A Christian turn'd Turke* (1610-1612).

### **Captain and 'Pirate' Ward in Pamphlets**

The earliest accounts of Ward appear in two pamphlets published in 1609: *Captaine Ward and Danseker* by Andrew Barker, a master of the English ship York Bonaventure

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5 The spelling of the extracts provided from these two pamphlets have been modernized by myself in order to make the texts more accessible.

(of Hull) who was captured by Ward’s men around 1608, and the anonymous pamphlet *Newes from Sea*. 1609 is significant because nineteen pirates including Jennings, Harris, Longcastle and Taverver were hanged on the Wrapping gallows on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December (Bak, 2006: 169). Thus, even though Barker had a privileged position among English pirates, whom were former acquaintances from England, he was well aware that he would be returning to England after his ransom, where the Ottomans and Ward were considered enemies. For this reason, Barker includes positive accounts of Ward related by his crew while condemning him for his service to the Ottomans. On the other hand, even though the author of *Newes from Sea* is not known<sup>6</sup>, he might have also been a mariner.

Barker’s work begins with a dedication to “Master T. I.,” emphasizing the danger that the Ottomans constituted for trade in the Mediterranean and for England, together with a claim that Ottomans owe their success at sea to their “Masters, Pirates”, who are “all Englishmen”:

“it is most lamentable to report, how many Ships of *London*, and other parts of England have been taken and made prey unto them: without the help of the English, the *Turks* by no means could have governed and conducted them through their unskillfulness and insufficiency in the art of *Navigation*: yet of late to my woeful experience, I can witness, they have been so readied by their instruction of our apostate countrymen, [I mean of *Ward* and others, who have been their commanders] to tackle their Ships, to man and manage a fight, that if it do not please God to move the heart of his Majesty, and other Christian Princes, and states, to join together for their speedy suppression, and the disjoining of their late strengthened forces, which continually increases by the Ships of *England*, and *Holland*, which they daily surprise. It will be discommodious to the state, and so dangerous to the commonwealth, in succeeding times, that Christendom must expect no Traffic at Sea [...]

(Barker 1609: 1-2)

The fact that the financial loss of England in 1608-9 was estimated to be “*infinite*”, only the losses of London amounting “*to above 200,000 pound[s]*” (Barker 1609: 2) illustrates the degree of the Ottoman danger for English mariners around the time the two pamphlets were written. It was reported that 466 English ships had been

6 Regarding *Newes from Sea*’s authorship, Lambert Ennis has stated that although published by Butter, it was entered in *Sort-Title Catalogue* (No. 25022) by John Busby. Butter seems to have obtained the right to the pamphlet “*turned it over to [Anthony] Nixon for refurbishing, then to a printer, and finally placed it on his material*”. He further states that “[i]n view of the pamphlet’s publication by Butter, its appearance during the year of Nixon’s closest affiliation with him, and the predominant Nixonese style, there can be little doubt that our author [Nixon] had a hand in *Newes from Sea*”. Lambert Ennis, “Anthony Nixon: Jacobean Plagiarist and Hack”, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 3.4, July 1940, pp.386-387.

attacked and their crews captured between 1609 and 1616 (Brown, in Matar 1988: 7). The Ottoman threat was so severe that it was feared that “*within two years [1627]*”, the Turks would not “*leave the King [James I] sailors to man his fleet*” (C.S.P. Domestic, in Matar 1998: 7).

In *Newes from Sea's*<sup>7</sup> dedication to the reader, similar to Barker, the anonymous author portrays the hatred felt by Christians towards the Ottoman Turks and Ward whose life has been described as “*a continual battle and defiance with Christians*” (Chapter II):

“TO the Reader, which is as much as to say, I care not what he be, so he be not a Turk: thou hast heard much talke of one captain *Ward*, and I know thou desirest to understand what he is? [...] he is a notable thief, he has undone many of your country men, [...] he has made slaves of many poor Christians [...]” (Anonymous 1609: “To the Reader”)

In order to satisfy the reader, he even goes as far as including a ‘fictional’ frontispiece showing Ward (and Danseker) “*hung out*” from the mast of a ship “*at Sea*” (“To the Reader”). Considering that Ward was never caught and punished by English authorities while Danseker (Simen Danziger, Simon de Danser, Dansker, Simon Reis), a Dutch corsair or privateer operating from Algiers, was captured and executed in 1611 (2 years after the publication of *Newes of Sea*) by the Ottomans for misconduct, it seems to be gratifying the general desire to see Ward punished rather than a reflection of historical truth.

While narration in *Newes from Sea* moves very fast from Ward’s ‘mean’ birth to his arrival to Algiers, Barker provides a more detailed account about Ward’s circumstances as a fisherman born in Faversham (Kent), his status as a privateer under the license of Queen Elizabeth I, and position under King James I. He claims, however, that his aim is to present a true report about the “*notorious and arch pirate Ward*”, a “*knave*” and “*a thief*” whose actions have caused terror in travellers as well as the merchants at home (Barker 1609: 3-4). Although Barker makes references to Ward’s courage, persistence, valour, his principle of not capturing English ships (until a royal pardon is denied) and willingness to raise funds to save captured Englishmen, such praiseworthy attributes are almost always coupled with regret for the loss of such a skilful mariner to the Ottomans: “*these last three years, [...]he [Ward] is grown the most absolute, the most resolute, and the most undaunted man in fight, that ever any heart did accompany at sea. And his actions were as honest as his valour is honourable, his deeds might be dignified in the Chronicles with the worthiest*” (1609: 14-15). Furthermore, the

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7 The source lacks information about the author as well as page numbers. Thus, chapter numbers will be provided instead of page numbers for this particular pamphlet.

pamphlet presents a negative portrait of Ward as someone who never paid his rent, drank, cursed and repined at other men’s good fortunes. In terms of narration, the work also includes anecdotes and certain dialogues such Ward’s persuasion of Lyon’s Whelp’s crew to become pirates:

“My mates, quote he, what’s to be done? here’s a scurvy world, and as scurvy we line in it, we feed here upon the water, on the king’s salt beef, without ere a penny to buy us bissell when he come ashore, here’s brine, but to revel, sup, and be merry, everyone at the proper charge of his own purse. So that this following night when the *Captain* and *Officers* shall conjecture nothing, but that we are drawing dry the pot, we’ll be giving arm deep in the *Fugitives* bags.” (1609: 5-6)

This extract expressing a kind of longing for the past, shows the difficulty of former privateers in adapting to new circumstances. And according to Chew, it was James I’s peace policy with Spain that was “*directly responsible for making the Barbary ports nests for desperate English outlaws*”. (1965: 343). The crew freely elected Ward as their Captain and left Plymouth on the stolen ship towards the Mediterranean, legally making them pirates.

In 1603, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli served as the main ports of Barbary Corsairs. Ward and his crew first went to Algiers, which was the largest, and the port from which the Ottomans launched attacks upon Spanish, French, and Florentine. Both *Newes from Sea* and Barker’s pamphlet give a detailed account of Algiers. They arrived to Algiers with three of the ships they had captured, the French merchantman captured off Cornwall, the Dutch Flyboat, and the Settee (Barker 1609: 11). However, they received a bad reception due to a previous visitor, Captain Richard Gifford<sup>8</sup>, who under the pretext of becoming a pirate set the Algerian galley fleet on fire. Although Gifford escaped and there was not much damage done, about a dozen Englishmen including his abandoned crew members were all executed. Furthermore, the pasha banned English ships, Janissaries seized English citizens and arrested English merchants, confiscating their goods for the damage done by Gifford:

“[...]the *king* had grounded such an inward hate against all Englishmen for *Gifford’s* treachery, that he solemnly vowed, that this injury should be a persecution to any of the whole nation, [...] in revenge of the former attempt, he put twelve *Englishmen*, who were there in *Algiers* to a most cruel

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8 “During the Anglo-Spanish wars Captain Richard Gifford had served under Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins and held commissions issued directly from Sir Robert Cecil and Sir Julius Caesar; after the wars he became a pirate-hunter, a freelance mercenary hired by the grand duke of Florence to extirpate the infamous nest of sea rovers at Algiers”. Greg Bak, *Barbary Pirate*, Stroud 2006, p. 47.

and lingering death, so that upon *Ward's* arrival, forbidding him to have any succour on his shore, and *Ward* on the other side having heard of his vow, not willing to play with the *Lyon's paw*, lest he should but feign himself asleep, without longer stay, at further suit, he with his pirates made up for *Tunis*.” (Barker 1609: 11-12)

Also in *Newes from Sea*, the author indicates that “*thirteen of the English were put to death for that, attempt, that were under the command of Captain Gifford an English Pirate*” and some of “*Wards company at that time imprisoned also for the same fact*” (1609: Chapter I). On arrival, the Ottomans arrested about eighty men from *Ward's* crew, but he was able to make a deal to pay their ransom: “*Ward having gotten much money at Sea, and greatly enrich himself with unlawful purchase by his Setty, joins with certain Janisaries, promises a sum of money, and so procures the peace and enlargement of his followers. This is the first of Wards proceedings in the Straits, till he came into the Turkish Dominions.*” (Anonymous, 1609: Chapter I). From this point on, the Ottomans and English sailed together. According to Bak, this was an “*unorthodox*” and historical moment since it was the first time that janissaries sailed with a non-Muslim and non-Ottoman captain (2006: 54-55).

After paying his crew's ransom and the experience of working with janissaries in Algiers, *Ward* went to *Tunis* in 1605 in order to become an Ottoman citizen and receive permission to have Ottoman soldiers sail under his command as in Algiers:

“Where with small fruit to the *King* [Pasha], in respect he [*Ward*] brought Merchandise with him, beneficial to the state, he had leave, there to find safe harbouring for himself, his ships and followers, where having made sale to his Commodities, and presented diverse acceptable presents to the *King* [Pasha] of *Tunis*, as also for his gifts, received some outward graces of the *Crossymon* [Kara Osman], which is as much to say, the *Lord Admiral* of the Sea, and the man that hath ever since, held share with *Ward* in all his *Voyages*, Prizes, and *Shippings*, and been his only supporter in all his designs, and upon whose promised favour and furtherance *Ward* growing bold, he was at length a suitor to the *King* [Pasha], that he might be received as his *subject*, or if not so, yet all the times, either in adversity or prosperity, himself and what the Sea could yield him, might be ever *sanctuaried* under his Princely protection, and in recompense thereof, he vowed, he would for ever after, become a foe to all *Christians*, be a persecutor to their *Traffic*, and an impoverisher of their *wealth*, only (belike the devil not yet having his full grip on him) he desired, his own *Country* might be excepted out of his task, whom both by *natural love* and *obedience*, he was bound to respect.” (Barker 1609: 12)

It is evident from Barker's account that he was not familiar with the Ottoman administration system. In this respect, “*the king of Tunis*” mentioned by Barker is the Pasha of Tunis, and “*the Crossyman*” or “*Uthman Dey*” is actually Kara Osman or Osman Bey, commander of the Janissary corps in Tunis. Ward's suit was granted in 1606, and he joined the Barbary Corsairs as a ‘Reis’, which would normally require him to be a member of the ‘taifa’ (tayfa). Thus, Ward's decision to lead mixed crews made up of Christians and Muslims, and Osman Bey's break with tradition eventually resulted in new opportunities for Christian seamen throughout Ottoman North Africa such as the Dutch pirate Danseker, who began to sail as Reis under the Pasha of Algiers (Bak 2006: 55; 71-72). From that point on, Ward shared “*his loot with Cara Osman*”, with whom he developed a very close relationship, acquired “*wealth and glory*”, lead numerous “*runnagates*” such as Thomas Mitton, William Graves, Toby Glanville, and Anthony Johnson, and prospered as a result of his piracy in Tunis. By the year 1607, Ward had “*a huge ship manned by Anglo-Turkish crew of 400.*” (in Matar 1999: 61) It was in Tunis that Barker was taken prisoner.

As for the kind of life led by Ward as an Ottoman Reis, both pamphlets reflect a kind of envy towards Ward's luxurious life. It is indicated in *Newes from Sea* that Ward was given land and lived a luxurious life, for bringing and selling his spoils acquired at Sea to the Viceroy of Tunis:

“Having grown very rich by the spoil of many Nations, crept into their favours by his often coming to *Tunis* to make sale of such goods as he made wrongful purchase of at Sea, which liberty he had by all toleration, and allowance from the Turk, so as he might go and come at his pleasure, for they had them at such prices, as they made great profit of them, in so much as the Viceroy of *Tunis* gave him a large piece of ground, that sometimes before was an old Castle, and all the stone that belonged unto it: upon which it is reported he hath built a very stately house, fare more fit for a Prince, then a pirate: By Sea he is said to be of the strength of three or four and twenty sail of ships: he is guarded at Sea in a Cabbin with a doubleguard of 12. Turks, always standing at his cabin door, in the name of his Court a guard: His respect and regard is reported to be such with the Turk, as he is made equal in estimation with the *Bashaw* [Basha].” (Anonymous 1609: Chapter 10)

Ward's luxurious life in Tunis is also emphasized in Barker's pamphlet:

“Ward, he lives there in Tunis, in a most princely and magnificent state. His apparel both curious and costly, his diet sumptuous, and his followers

seriously observing and obeying his will. He has two Cooks that dress and prepare his diet for him, and taster before he eats. I do not know any Person in England that bears up his port in more dignity, nor has his Attendants more obsequious unto him. [...] his riches have made him proud. And so being now at the highest, in hope pride shall have a fall” (Barker 1609: 16)

However, Ward and his crew led a disorderly life “condemned and abhorred” by Christianity such as “*thieving at Sea*”, swearing, drinking, dicing, “*consuming riot*”, sodomy, Atheism, and mixing themselves “*like brute with the enemies [Jews] of their Saviour*” so that Ward was “*a Christian in the morning*” and a *bedfellow to a Jew at night.*” (Barker 1609: 15) Similarly in *Newes from Sea*, it is indicated that during his stay at *Tunis*, “*he never thought on the service of God, [...] Thus as the Sea might by experience relate his spoils and cruelty, so the Land was an eye-witness of his drunkenness and idle prodigality*” (Anonymous 1609: Chapter III). In 1607, Sir Anthony Shirley, being his countryman and Christian, even sent him a letter in order to dissuade him “*from that wicked & villainous manner of living*”, and persuade him to “*bear Arms with the Christians against the Turk*” rather than to “*do the Turk service, or by robbing or spoiling of Christians to enrich him or his dominions*” (in Anonymous 1609: Chapter VI). Ward, in response, said he would “*rather venture himself amongst the Turks, then in the hands of Christian*” (in Anonymous 1609: Chapter VI). *Newes from Sea* ends with the note that Ward’s fortune is only temporary: “*But these honours are like letters written in the sand, / which are blown away with every gust of wind,*” emphasizing that he will eventually pay for his wrongdoings and be haunted by the injuries he has caused the people (Anonymous 1609: Chapter 10). In the end, it is the *Reniera e Soderina*, which determined his fate. The ship, carrying 150 Englishmen and 250 Turks, sank due to Ward’s modifications which not only put him in a difficult position in *Tunis*, but also eliminated his chances of receiving a royal pardon<sup>9</sup>. 45 Englishmen from Ward’s crew took *Little John* and went to *Malta* while *Kara Osman* took half of the *Mattelena* for his share of *Little John*, leaving Ward bound to him. So, Ward left without a ship, friends or royal pardon<sup>10</sup>, became Muslim with his crew. In December 1610, the Venetian envoy in London sent word home

9 The mighty ship seized by Ward on 26 April 1607 caused great sensation throughout the Venetian territories due to its valuable cargo and the shock of losing such a magnificent ship, “*one of the largest sailing vessels used by the Serene of Venice in its Mediterranean commerce*”. Greg Bak (2006). *Barbary Pirate: The Life and Crimes of John Ward, the Most Infamous Privateer of His Times*, Stroud: Sutton Pub. p. 119.

(Bak 2006: 119). For this reason, Venetian authorities blocked his chance of getting a royal pardon.

10 “The Venetian ambassador to England, Zorzi Gustinian, reported in October 1607 that Ward had formally applied to James I for a pardon, offering, in exchange for amnesty for himself and three hundred followers, to return ships, guns, and commodities valued at more than 30,000 crowns and cease all piratical activities.” Daniel Vitkus (2003). *Turning Turk: English Theatre and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630*. p. 148.

that “the pirate Ward and Sir Francis Verney [...] and Englishman of the noblest blood, have become Turks, to the great indignation of the whole nation” (in Chew 1965, 355). From this point on, Ward does not restrain from capturing his countrymen in addition to other Christians, and trains Tunis men “to scourge the Coast” (Barker 1609, 22). This is the point where Barker is ransomed and the pamphlet about Ward’s “incredible wealth, as also of the spoil that our own Nation of England hath sustained within these two years” based on the information and anecdotes delivered by William Graves (Barker 1609: 22) comes to an end. Barker also provides a list of ships and twenty-three captains of English ships captured by Ward and his men (Barker 1609: 22). Similarly, *Newes from Sea* also includes two separate lists of ships captured by Ward and Danseker<sup>11</sup>. The catalogue of ships taken by Ward and his confederate until April 6, 1609 include the Pearl, the Charity, the Trojan, the Elizabeth, and Barker’s ship: “The York Bonaventure of Hull, of the burthen of 180. tons of whom Andrew Barker was Master: this ship had 15. Pieces of ordinance.” (1609: Catalogue)

As for Ward’s fate, his meeting with Scottish traveller William Lithgow in Tunis, related in *Rare Adventures and Painful Peregrinations* (1632), proves that Ward was alive and well in the year 1615:

“Here in *Tunis* I met with our English Captain, general *Ward*, once a great Pirate, and Commander at Seas; who in despite of his denied acceptance in *England* had turned *Turk*, and built there a faire Palace, beautified with rich Marble and Alabaster stones: With whom I found Domestic some fifteen circumcised English Renegades, whose lives and Countenances were both alike even as desperate as disdainful. Yet old *Ward* their Master was placable, and joined me safely with a passing Land conduct to *Algiers*; yea and diverse times in my ten days staying there, I dined and supped with him, but lay aboard in the French ship.” (Lithgow 1640: 358)

Thus, while Ward was condemned and cursed in England, he was leading a comfortable life in Tunis.

The two pamphlets composed the same year (1609) fifteen pirates were hanged on the same day is a reflection of how severe the situation was for the English. For this reason, both accounts of Ward dwell on his crimes against his nation, religion, or people. The fascination as well as condemnation of Ward’s is also apparent in the literary texts that are based on these pamphlets.

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11 *Newes from Sea*, gives the following information about these two Christians working in Ottoman territory: “the one [*Ward*] robs the Dutch, French, Spanish, &c all but the English: the other robs the English, French, Spanish, &c. and all but the Dutch” (Anonymous 1609: Chapter VI).

## Ward in English Ballads and Poems

The life and deeds of Captain Ward related in the two pamphlets appear in certain early seventeenth century ballads and poems. This illustrates that Ward was not only the subject of pamphlets or formal texts aiming to give information about this infamous captain, but also part of the popular culture of the period. Ward's portrayal in ballads, which are lyrical poems sung by the people, is especially important because they are part of the oral tradition and composed for the general public. On the other hand, it must be pointed out the ballads and poems alluding to Ward, apart from the imaginary "Ward and the Rainbow" are either extracted from or based on the pamphlets taken up in this study. In "Seamen's Song of Captain Ward" (1609), "The Seamans Song of Dansekar" (1609) and "The Famous Sea Fight between Captain Ward and the Rainbow" (early 17<sup>th</sup> Century), Samuel Rowlands' two poems "The Picture of a Pirat[e]" (1612-13) and "To a Reprobate Pirat that hath renounced Christ and is Turn'd Turke" (1612-13), the general inclination has been the glorification of Ward's courage and advancement while magnifying his decision to work in the service of the Ottomans and converting to Islam. Thus, at certain points, he is represented through the employment of biblical imagery, as a person working for the Devil against Christians. Alternatively, it is highlighted that his deeds would have been recognized and included in chronicles if only he had been serving his own nation instead of the Turks, a point emphasized in pamphlets as well.

The two broadside ballads, "The Seamens Song of Captain Ward" and "The Seamans Song of Dansekar the Duchman"<sup>12</sup> were extracted from the pamphlet *Newes from Sea* and entered under John Bushby in the *Stationers' Register* on July 3, 1609 (the same year as the pamphlets). The first broadside ballad traces Ward's life, beginning from his birth, rise to wealth and power, and ends with a moral tone underlining his expected downfall in the near future. In line with the anonymous pamphlet, it begins with Ward's birth in Faversham, and his departure from Plymouth with his crew. Although Ward and his crew are praised for their courage and skill, they are denounced for serving the Ottomans: "*Christian Princes have but few/Such Seaman, if that he were true,/and would but for his King & Country fight,*" (L 12-14). As an English privateer, Ward "*Spared not the Turks one jot/but of their lives great slaughter he did make*" (L17-18)", but as pirates, they spend their "*wicked gotten treasure*" (L43) in drunkenness, lechery, and sodomy. Ward, who neither fears "*God nor the Divel [Devil]*" (L58) lives like royalty in Tunis, guarded by Turks "*that are not of a good belief*":

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12 Sec. English Broadside Ballad Archive. <https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu>

"At Tunis in Barbary  
Now he buildeth stately,  
    a gallant Palace and a Royal place,  
Decked with delights most trim,  
Fitter for a Prince then him.  
    the which at last will prove to his disgrace." (L73-78)

Ward, commands twenty-four ships that bring his "*treasure from the sea*" into the market "*which the Turks do buy up without fail*" (L82-84). The ballad, however, ends with a warning: Although the Turks regard Ward as "*equal to the Nobles of the Land*", these honours will be "*shortly blown up with the Wind, / or prove like letters written in the sand.*" (L85-90) The dominant tone in the poem about Ward's advancement and wealth is that of denunciation, Ward and his crew are criticized for serving the 'infidel' Turks.

The second ballad, "The Seamans Song Dansekar the Duchman" focuses on two of the most famous Christian Barbary Corsairs of the time whom "*All the world about have heard / Of Dansekar and English Ward.*" (L16-17) These two Christian mariners who have caused financial loss to all nations and merchants, "*left children fatherless*" and "*widows in distress*", are especially notorious for fighting against Christians:

"The glories would be at the highest  
To fight against the foes of Christ  
    and such as do our Christian faith deny,  
But their cursed Villanies,  
And their bloody Pyracies  
    are chiefly bent against our Christian friends" (L34-39)

Moreover, these "*sons of Divels [Devils]*" do not restrain from capturing English ships such as London's Elizabeth, Pearl and Charity, Trojan of London, and English merchants: "*England suffers danger / As well as any stranger*" (L41-44). The two "*Pyrats*" have "*shed their [Christian] blood*" and sold their goods to the Turks (L58-60). It also includes reference to Barker's ship "*Of Hull and Bonaventer*" taken by "*Pyrats Ward and Danseker*" and "*brought by them into Captivity*" (L61-66). This ballad, similar to "Seamens Song of Captain Ward", ends with a moral tone by stating that the two 'pirates' operating from Tunis and Algiers will be punished. It is claimed that God's providence that has led Ward and Danseker to stop working together (due to the sharing of spoils) will eventually lead to their end: "*God will soon give them an overthrow*" for their wicked ways (L83-84).

Since “Seamen’s Song of Captain Ward” and “The Seamans Song of Dansekar” have been extracted directly from *Newes from Sea*, they reflect the same perspective as the anonymous author of the pamphlet. In this respect, they provide details about the misconduct of Ward and Dansekar (in the second poem), two Christian mariners who have turned against their fellow-Christians by serving the Ottomans. In this respect, these ‘pirates’ are presented as anti-heroes who will be punished for their sins against Christians and Christianity by the providence of God.

While the two ballads above are based on *Newes from Sea*, a later one entitled “Captain Ward and the Rainbow”<sup>13</sup> takes up a fictional event. Although the exact date of this particular ballad is not known, it is very likely that a historical ballad would describe a contemporary event<sup>14</sup>. Considering that Essex, Clifford, and Mountjoy, mentioned in the ballad, respectively died in 1601, 1605 and 1606, and the two pamphlets on Ward were written in 1609, the ballad might have been composed in the first two decades of the seventeenth century<sup>15</sup>. The ballad focuses on King James I’s attempt to subdue John Ward by sending the Rainbow. In order to receive a pardon with his crew, Ward offers King James thirty tons of gold:

“His name is Captain Ward, right well it doth appear,  
There has not been such a rover found out this thousand year.  
For he hath sent unto our king, the sixth of January,

Desiring that he might come in, with all his company:  
`And if your king will let me come till I my tale have told,  
I will bestow for my ransome full thirty tun of gold.” (L 3-8)

The above stanza is actually referring to Ward’s plea for a royal pardon in the summer of 1607. In the ballad, the king “*in great grief*” that Ward should “*play the arrant thief*” upon the sea and not give English “*merchant ships*” free passage, declines his offer to return to England with his prize and sends the Rainbow (one of Sir Francis Drake’s four ships used in his expedition against Cadiz in 1587) with “*Five hundred gallant seamen*” and “*fifty brass pieces*” to capture him (L16-28). According to Christopher Lloyd, the author of the ballad “*confuses the Rainbow with the ships of Captain Rainsborough or Rainsborow*” (1981: 51). The gallant shooters, however, are not successful in subduing “*brave Ward*” (L30). Furthermore, Ward questions James’

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13 Francis James Child (ed.) (2003). “John Ward and the Rainbow”. In *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads Vol 5*: 144-145.

14 “*The Famous Sea-fight between Captain Ward and the Rainbow.*” Licensed and entered. London, Printed by and for W. Onley. Dated at the the British Museum 1680 at the earliest.

15 On the other hand, the ballad broadside itself was “dated at the British Museum, 1680 at the earliest” (Child, 2003: 144-145).

authority: “Go tell the King of England, go tell him thus from me, / If he reign king of all the land, I will reign king at sea.” (L37-38). The king is left lamenting the failure of the Rainbow and the loss of three of his captains “Lord [George] Clifford”, Earl of Cumberland”, “[Charles Blount,] Lord Mountjoy”, and “[Robert Devereux,] Earl of Essex” (L45-47). The portrayal of Ward as a “king at sea” equivalent to James I “king of all the land” is significant since it shows that Ward was a kind of hero for the common audience. As Sisneros has also stated, for the ballad audience, Ward was someone “who found his own authoritative agency outside a newly imposed institutional framework that, not a decade prior, would have lauded his lucrative exploits.” (2016: 60). In this respect, this particular ballad, which was neither extracted from the pamphlets nor had a moral purpose, reflects the genuine perspective held by the people about Ward.

The next two poems “The Picture of a Pirat[e]” and “To a Reprobate Pirat[e] that hath renounced Christ and is Turn’d Turke” (1612-13) by Samuel Rowlands allude to John Ward for moral or religious purposes. Rowlands, known to have composed religious poems among other literary work, employs the same approach when dealing with Ward. Unlike the pamphlets or ballads alluding to Ward, Rowlands’ poems abstain from including any positive details about the English ‘Pirate’ or his crew.

In the first poem, the pirate persona, presumably Ward, talks of his “*dwellings*”, “*crew of thievish Knaves*”, and his life at sea neighbouring “*Monsters of the Seas*” (L1-5). He defines himself as a man who spent his life in “*outrageous evils*” on his ships manned by “*incarnate devils*”, and heart which “*denies a [Christian] God*” or the “*ten*” commandments (L 7-12). For this, he expects to die in the Gallows, where pirates were generally hanged: “*like a Swan, to sing my dying hower.*” (L 13-17) The usage of a biblical style and imagery such the phrases “*outrageous evils*”, “*Incarnate devils*”, and “*lawless nature*” to describe Ward and his crew destined to be punished at the gallows like other former pirates aims to warn people about the fatal end of such ‘lawless’ men. Rowlands’ moral approach also continues in the second poem entitled “To a Reprobate Pirat[e] that hath Renounced Christ and is Turn’d Turke”, which is a direct reference to Ward converting to Islam (“*Turn’d Turke*”) (1612). This poem draws a parallel between serving the Turks, who are considered infidels, and serving the Devil. Ward, “*Renouncing Christian faith & Christian name*”, is described as a “*villain*”, “*wicked lump*” of sin and shame, a man who is worse than Judas who betrayed, Christ or devils who accept that “*Christ was the Son of God*” (L1-9). Thus, Ward is demonized:

“[...], thou Hellish Beast,

That hast lived cursed Thief upon the Seas,

And now a Turk on shore dost take thine ease,  
Like a devouring monster in a den,  
All that thou hast, being spoils of other men.  
Thou that doest serve both Turk, and devil so well,  
Thou seeks to draw (as they doe) souls to Hell,” (L8-14)

As punishment for drawing souls to Hell like the Devil or devilish Turks, perpetual flames in Hell will be his “Reward”: “*Gods Fearfull Judgements (villaine) are at hand./ Davils attend, Hell fier is prepar’d:/Perpetuall flames is reprobates Reward.*” (L18-20) Needless to say, the word play in the last line (“Re-ward”) points to John Ward as the subject of the poem.

These two poems by Rowlands are different from the ballads, as mentioned earlier, in that they exclude any allusion to Ward’s positive traits such as his great courage and skill as a mariner, while portraying him a thief, knave, misbeliever, devil, and someone who denies God and his commandments. For Rowlands, Ward becoming an Ottoman privateer, converting to Islam, and working to capture Christian ships and crew, make him a symbol of a misbeliever, an infidel who has renounced Christianity, Christians, God and Christ. In the end, he will receive the greatest punishment by going to Hell.

### **Ward in Robert Daborne’s Tragedy A Christian turn’d Turke**

Robert Daborne’s tragedy *A Christian turn’d Turke: or, The Tragickall Lives and Deaths of two Famousse Pyrates, WARD and DANSIKER*<sup>16</sup> was composed around the time twelve captured pirates were hung on the same day in Wapping, and James I’s issue of a royal proclamation against piracy, with special emphasis on Captain Ward and other English pirates (Hughes and Larkin in Vitkus 2003: 148). Daborne’s play dealing with Ward’s exploits and life in Tunis, includes historically accurate and fictional characters from different religious groups such as the Christian captains Ward and Dansiker, Christian gentlemen, Turks such as Viceroy, Crosman, Mufti, and Jews. The title of the play has both a religious and political connotation since the term ‘turn’d Turk’ was employed as a synonym for an infidel, heretic, something false or deceitful as well as embracing Islam. Thus, the central focus in the play is Ward’s decision to become a Muslim and tragic fictional end.

Daborne’s play begins with a sea-fight, after which Ward’s crew confiscate the ship’s crew and goods. In this setting, Ward makes a grand entrance with Gismund introducing him as a mighty hero equivalent to a conqueror:

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16 For a detailed study of the play. See. Sıla Şenlen. (1999). “*The Civil Infidels’: Representation of the Turks in Renaissance Drama.* (Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi), University College Dublin, Dublin 1999.

Do you know this honourable shape? Heroic Captain Ward, lord of the ocean, terror of kings, landlord to merchants, rewarder of manhood, conqueror of the Western world, to whose followers the lands and seas pay tribute; and they to none, but once in their lives to the manor of Wapping, and then are free ever after. This is he, my noble mummers. (Scene 1<sup>17</sup>)

Although one of the French merchants offers them gold in exchange for their freedom, Ward’s crew take the men to be sold as slaves or to await being ransomed.

Since the chief focus of the play is Ward’s decision to become a Muslim, most of play involves the persuasion and manipulation of Ward to ‘turn Turk’<sup>18</sup>. In this respect, the Governor (a convert himself) and Crosman suggest that Ward convert to Islam in order to rise in status. On his refusal, Crosman employs his sister to seduce Ward into apostasy. The very moment Ward lays eyes on Voada, it is apparent that Crosman’s plan will be a success: “*Here comes an argument that would persuade A God turn mortal.*” (7.1) Voada confesses her love for him, but refuses to be with someone “*whose religion Speaks me [her] an infidel*”. She suggests that he becomes a Muslim to win her love: “*Turn Turk --I am yours*” (7.1) to which Ward consents. This point in the play is significant because Ward’s soliloquy presented after her departure, gives insight to his thoughts as well as his circumstances:

“[...] chaste Voada  
Nothing can make him miserable enjoys thee-  
What is’t I loose by change? My country?  
Already ’tis to me impossible,  
My name is scandaled? What is one Island  
Compared to the Eastern Monarchy? This large  
Unbounded station shall speak my future fame;” (7.1)

For Ward, his “*country*” is “*impossible*” since a royal pardon was denied to him. Furthermore, a comparison is made between Britain (one island) and the Ottoman Empire (the Eastern Monarchy) in terms of possibilities. Thus, Ward’s apostasy is linked to his hope of advancement, wealth and lust, rather than favouring one

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17 The extracts from *A Christian turn'd Turke* will be provided from an online source with scene division. <https://crrs.ca/new/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/A-Christian-turmd-turk-short-scenes.pdf> Edited Online [Viewed 9 January 2020].

18 For critique of Jacobean economic policy in Daborne’s play See. Benjamin D. Vanwagoner, (2019). “Pirate Economics in Robert Daborne’s *A Christian Turned Turk*”, *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 59.2. pp. 305-324.

religion over another. His actual conversion ceremony is presented in the form of a comical dumb show including a parade of Turks bearing half-moons, Ward kissing “a Mahomet’s head”, spurring wine offered by a Christian captive, and circumcision where Ward substitutes an ape’s tail’ for his foreskin to trick the Turks. His villainies occupy the remainder of the play until the Governor places Ward under arrest and orders that he be torn a “peece-meale” and his accursed limbs thrown into the sea. On his monument is to be inscribed: “Ward sold his country, turn’d Turk, and died a slave” (16.3). Before his death, Ward curses the Ottomans for their ungratefulness. He claims to have brought them wealth through his spoils as well as teaching them naval technology:

“[Stabs himself.]  
You’re slaves of Mahomet,  
Ungrateful curs, that have repaid me thus  
For all the service that I have done for you.  
He that hath brought more treasure to your shore  
Than all Arabia yields! He that hath shown you  
The way to conquer Europe-- did first impart  
What your forefathers knew not, the seaman’s art;  
Which had they attained, this universe had been  
One monarchy. May all your seed be damned!” (16.3)

His last wish is that the slaves (most probably a reference to Christian slaves) tear down the Ottoman Empire and the unification of Christians against the Turks:

“The name of Ottoman be the only scorn  
And by-word to all nations; may his own slaves  
Tear out the bowels of the last remains  
Unto his blood-propped throne; may ye cut each others throats;  
Or may, O may, the force of Christendom  
Be reunited, and all at once requite  
The lives of all that you have murdered,  
Beating a path out to Jerusalem,  
Over the bleeding breasts of you and yours.” (16.3)

Ward’s fictionalized end, at a time when he was still living a prosperous life in Tunis, is punishment for his allegiance with the Ottoman Turks, his disloyalty to his nation

and apostasy: “Ward sold his country, turn’d Turke, and died a slave.” (16.3) The act of divine judgment and Ward’s tragic end is a warning to those who are allured by financial possibilities in the Ottoman Empire.

In conclusion, the representation of Captain John Ward or Yusuf Reis –who was considered a traitor to England for becoming a Barbary corsair, converting to Islam, and teaching the Turks the knowledge of European navigation technology– in early seventeenth century English literature ranges between admiration for a ‘base born’ mariner who made a great fortune in Ottoman lands, to loathing felt towards one of the most well-known renegades of the time who preyed on Christian ships. Thus, the notorious English Captain Ward who ‘turn’d Turk’ in seventeenth century pamphlets, ballads, poems and plays is both celebrated and demonized. Both Barker’s pamphlet and *Newes from Sea* portray Ward as someone skilled in maritime war, management of his crew as well as diplomacy while also discussing negative aspect about his characters such as his drunkenness, sodomy and Atheism. Since the literary texts mentioned in this study have all, more or less, relied on *Newes from Sea*, they seem to be reflecting Ward in similar negative light. The exception would be “Ward and the Rainbow” based on an unhistorical event and parts of *A Christian turn’d Turke* that includes a humorous conversion ceremony as well as the fictional death of Ward. The moral tone dominant in these texts seems to be a warning about the fate of those allured by the promise of wealth and advancement in Ottoman lands.

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