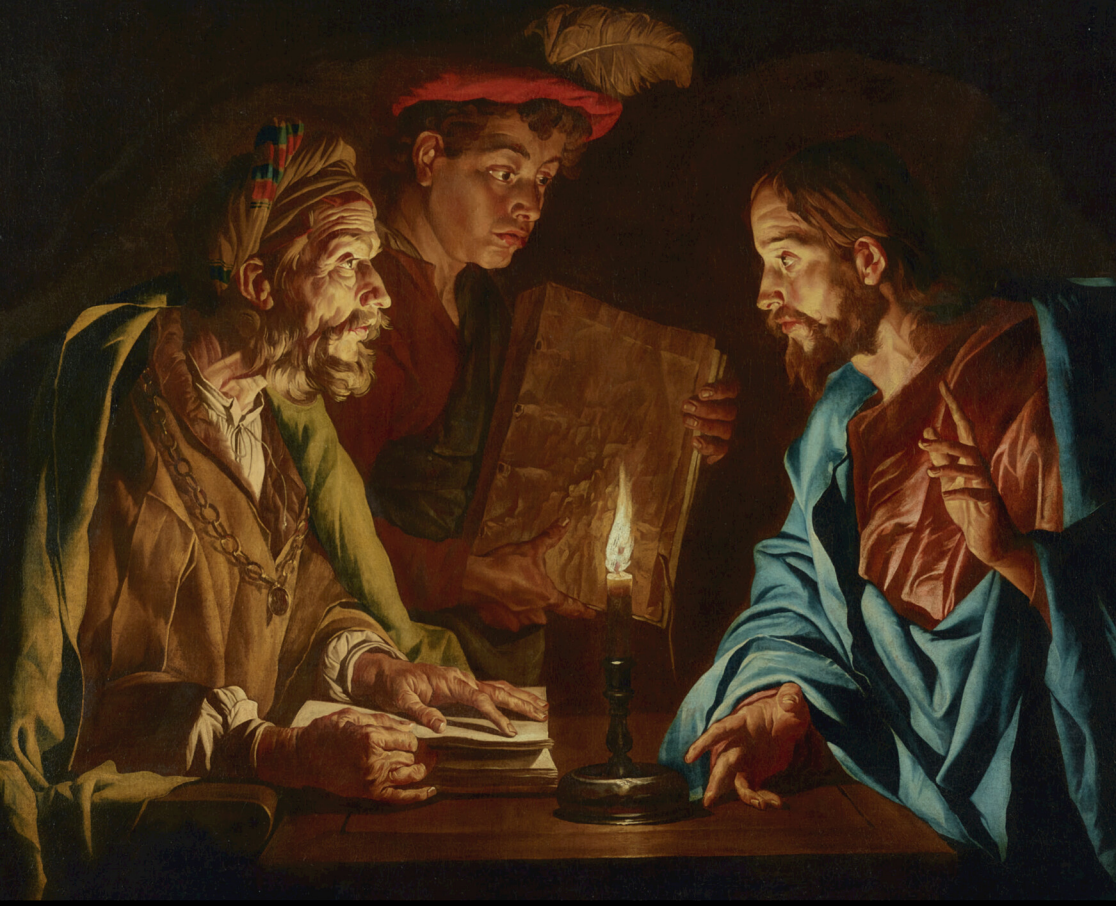

# Religious Dissimulation and Early Modern Drama

## The Limits of Toleration

Kilian Schindler

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# RELIGIOUS DISSIMULATION AND EARLY MODERN DRAMA

Kilian Schindler examines how playwrights such as William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and Christopher Marlowe represented religious dissimulation on stage and argues that debates about the legitimacy of dissembling one's faith were closely bound up with early modern conceptions of theatricality. Considering both Catholic and Protestant perspectives on religious dissimulation in the absence of full toleration, Schindler demonstrates its ubiquity and urgency in early modern culture. By reconstructing the ideological undercurrents that inform both religious dissimulation and theatricality as a form of dissimulation, this book makes a case for the centrality of dissimulation in the religious politics of early modern drama. Lucid and original, this study is an important contribution to the understanding of early modern religious and literary culture. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

KILIAN SCHINDLER is assistant professor of early modern English literature at the University of Fribourg. He is co-editor of a critical edition of Sebastian Castellio's *De haereticis an sint persequendi* (2023).

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*The Limits of Toleration*

KILIAN SCHINDLER
*University of Fribourg*

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*To my parents*

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# *Note on Dates and Texts*

I have followed the convention of taking 1 January as the start of the calendar year. When citing from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century editions, I have preserved original capitalisation, punctuation, and spelling (including *u/v* and *i/j*), with the exception of long *s* and *vv*, which I have changed to regular *s* and *w*. Further, I have reversed italic font and spelled out ligatures and superscript abbreviations such as $y^e$ or the tilde. If they are available, I have cited page numbers, and if not, signatures. All Biblical references are to the 1560 edition of the *Geneva Bible*, unless indicated otherwise. References to the works of Ben Jonson are to the *Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, and references to the works of Francis Bacon are to *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, unless indicated otherwise.



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# *Abbreviations*

| | |
|---|---|
| 1H4 | Shakespeare, William. *King Henry IV Part 1*. Ed. David Scott Kastan. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Bloomsbury, 2002. [Also referred to as *1 Henry IV*.] |
| 2H4 | Shakespeare, William. *King Henry IV Part 2*. Ed. René Weis. The Oxford Shakespeare. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. [Also referred to as *2 Henry IV*.] |
| 3H6 | Shakespeare, William. *King Henry VI Part 3*. Eds. John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Bloomsbury, 2001. [Also referred to as *3 Henry VI*.] |
| CEWBJ | Jonson, Ben. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*. Gen. Eds. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson. 7 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. |
| CIC | *Corpus iuris canonici*. Ed. Emil Albert Friedberg. 2 vols. Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1959. |
| CO | Calvin, Jean. *Joannis Calvini opera quae supersunt omnia*. Eds. Edouard Cunitz, Johann-Wilhelm Baum, and Eduard Wilhelm Eugen Reuss. 59 vols. Braunschweig/Berlin: C.A. Schwetschke, 1863–1900. |
| CWE | Erasmus. *Collected Works of Erasmus*. 89 vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974–. |
| H5 | Shakespeare, William. *King Henry V*. Ed. T. W. Craik. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Bloomsbury, 1995. [Also referred to as *Henry V*.] |
| HSS | *Ben Jonson*. Eds. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson. 11 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925–52. |



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| | |
|---|---|
| OCCS | *The Oldcastle Controversy*. Eds. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991. |
| ODNB | *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* |
| OED | *Oxford English Dictionary* |
| OFB | Bacon, Francis. *The Oxford Francis Bacon*. 6 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996–. |
| PL | *Patrologia Latina*. Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. 221 vols. Paris: Migne, 1841–65. |
| SR | *The Statutes of the Realm*. 11 vols. 1810–28. London: Dawsons, 1963. |
| STC | *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*. Comp. A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave. 2nd ed. 3 vols. London: Bibliographical Society, 1976–91. |
| Wiv. | Shakespeare, William. *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Ed. Giorgio Melchiori. The Arden Shakespeare. London: Bloomsbury, 2000. |

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# *Introduction*

When Anthony Munday returned to England after his travels in France and Italy in 1578–9, he had a great deal to account for. The future playwright and one of the period's most prolific English prose writers had stayed for several months at the English College in Rome, one of the centres of English Catholicism on the continent. Had Munday turned Catholic? His behaviour upon his return to England suggests otherwise. When the Jesuit Edmund Campion was captured in 1581, Munday testified against him and his fellow-martyrs, including Ralph Sherwin, whom Munday had met in Rome, and gained notoriety as an anti-Catholic polemicist.[1] However, Munday's testimony was questioned by the defence as the fabrication of a notorious dissembler: 'beyond the seas he goeth on pilgrimage, and receiveth the sacrament, making himself a Catholic, and here he taketh a new face, and playeth the Protestant'.[2] Cardinal William Allen, one of the leading English Catholic publicists of the 1580s, later similarly condemned Munday as one of the witnesses that were 'companions knowen to be of no religion, of euery religion, coozeners, dissemblers, espials'.[3] Munday had indeed justified his stay in Rome by claiming 'that in France and other places he seemed to favour their religion, because he might thereby undermine them and sift out their purposes'.[4] However, when Munday eventually published an account of his continental travels in *The English Romayne Lyfe* (1582), he offered a more trivial explanation, namely, the 'desire to see straunge Countreies, as also affection to learne the languages . . . and not any other intent or cause, God is my record'.[5] His pretence of Catholic sympathies, Munday implies several times, primarily served to gain access to recusant funds in order to finance his travels.[6]

[1] For Munday's role in the trial and the pamphlets relating to it, see Turner 51–62; Hill, '"This Is as True as All the Rest Is"' 48–56. Documents related to the trial are printed in Simpson 393–442.
[2] Quoted in Simpson 430. [3] Allen, *Briefe historie* A7v. [4] Quoted in Simpson 430.
[5] Munday, *English Romayne Lyfe* 1. [6] Ibid. 3–4, 7–9.



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Whatever Munday's reasons may have been, his opponents perceived a link between his religious dissimulation and his association with the theatre. As already noted, he was accused of 'playing the Protestant' in Rome. A Catholic riposte from 1582, ascribed to the Jesuit Thomas Alfield, sardonically points out that Munday 'first was a stage player [no doubt a calling of some creditt]'[7] and recounts 'howe this scholler new come out of Italy did play extempore', only to be 'hissed . . . from his stage. Then being therby discouraged, he set forth a balet against playes, but yet (O constant youth) he now beginnes againe to ruffle vpon the stage'.[8] Munday's supposed inconstancy, here illustrated with his changing attitude towards the theatre, is arguably also supposed to evoke his religious inconstancy. After his stay in Rome, Alfield writes, Munday 'returned home to his first vomite againe'.[9] This Biblical phrase (Prov. 26:11) was common in early modern discourses of apostasy and recantation and may therefore refer as much to his religious inconstancy as to his return to the stage.[10]

While Munday's 'balet against playes', which Alfield mentions, has not survived, he has been credited with another attack on the stage, *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters* (1580). Ironically, this treatise makes, similar to the Jesuit Alfield, a case against the theatre as an institution that is incompatible with constancy: 'And as for those stagers themselues, are they not commonlie such kind of men in their conuersation, as they are in profession? Are they not as variable in hart, as they are in their partes?'.[11] The author of *A second and third blast* further claims to 'haue learned that he who dissembles the euil which he knowes in other men, is as giltie before God of the offence, as the offenders themselues . . . For he that dissembles vngodlines is a traitor to God'.[12] What, then, had Munday been doing in Rome? Had he temporarily converted to the Catholic faith, or had he merely 'played' the Catholic, as he later claimed, despite his subsequent condemnation of dissimulation as treason to God? And is the theatre itself to be considered a form of apostasy or dissimulation that is irreconcilable with a sincere confession of Christ?

As the strange case of Anthony Munday suggests, early modern debates on the legitimacy of the theatre were deeply embedded in religious culture.

[7] Alfield D4v; square brackets in the original.
[8] Ibid. E1r. John Dover Wilson identified the ballad, which has not survived, with 'A Ringing Retraite courageouslie sounded / Wherein Plaies and Players are fytlie confounded', which was licensed to Edward White on 10 November 1580 (486).
[9] Alfield E1r. [10] Hamilton, *Munday and the Catholics* xx.
[11] Munday, *A second and third blast* 111. [12] Ibid. 57.

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They raise questions about authenticity and dissimulation, about constancy and apostasy, which cannot be separated from their historical context in which religious persecution and intolerance often led religious dissenters to play the Protestant or the Catholic, respectively. Although the reformations of the sixteenth century resulted in an unprecedented religious pluralisation in Latin Christianity, political and ecclesiastical authorities frequently still attempted to enforce an ideal of religious uniformity. Religious minorities were often faced with a stark choice: they could suffer martyrdom, emigrate, or dissemble their beliefs. There is a rich body of scholarship on early modern martyrdom, and increasing attention is being paid to emigration for religious reasons.[13] Of course, these two courses of action were largely elite phenomena, and their ideological capital stood in a disproportionate relationship to the lived experience of most people, who tended to conform with the state-imposed religion. However, the legitimacy of religious dissimulation was hotly debated among political theorists of the period, who often disagreed on whether, or to what extent, political and ecclesiastical authorities had a claim to the inner life of their subjects. Theologians across the confessional spectrum likewise dedicated much time and energy to the question of whether it was legitimate for Christ's persecuted flock to dissemble their beliefs in order to avoid persecution. Even as the Reformation infused fresh blood into the literature of martyrdom and gave birth to specific confessional martyrological traditions, the religious conflicts of the sixteenth century ushered in what Perez Zagorin has characterised as the 'Age of Dissimulation',[14] to which literary scholars, too, are now turning their attention.[15]

Such dissimulation was also part and parcel of the confessionally multifarious world of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, whose practitioners' religious identities are often difficult to ascertain, seemingly contradictory, and subject to change. Religious dissimulation was very much part of their life-world, and none of the playwrights whose work I discuss at length in this book can be assigned a straightforward confessional label that is not complicated by suspiciously ostentatious performances of religious identity or the obfuscation of religious identity where biographers have sometimes desperately looked for it. While some of these playwrights covered their

[13] See, for example, Terpstra. [14] Zagorin 330.

[15] As Andrew Hadfield has recently noted in his contribution to *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare and Religion* (2019), 'it is likely that Nicodemites [i.e. religious dissemblers] could have been the largest category of religious believers in early modern Europe' (Hadfield, 'Biography and Belief' 28–9). See also Hadfield, *Lying in Early Modern English Culture*, especially ch. 3, 'The Religious Culture of Lying'.

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tracks as far as their own beliefs are concerned (William Shakespeare), others simulated religious beliefs in order to spy on dissenters (Anthony Munday and, perhaps, Christopher Marlowe) even as they attacked religious dissimulation or repeatedly changed their beliefs – at least outwardly – during their career (Ben Jonson). However, the aim of this book is not to clear up biographical questions concerning the religious beliefs of these writers but to show how early modern drama, from c. 1590 to 1614, represented these various kinds of religious dissimulation and explored its meta-theatrical implications.

This book is the first study that is entirely devoted to reading plays by Shakespeare, Jonson, Marlowe, Munday, and others in the context of early modern debates on religious dissimulation. As the subtitle of this book, 'The Limits of Toleration', further suggests, religious dissimulation can also tell us something about religious toleration, its limits in early modern England, and the drama that it produced. Thus, our understanding of early modern toleration and the way it was represented, propagated, and criticised on stage has much to gain from taking into account the dynamic and multifaceted interplay between religious dissimulation and toleration. I thereby hope to add new nuances to previous research on toleration in early modern drama by expanding the categories in which toleration could manifest itself, or not, and by raising the question to what extent the medium of the theatre itself could be said to imply toleration for religious dissimulation.[16]

The connection between religious dissimulation and toleration can be understood in three different ways. First, dissimulation was an index of intolerance insofar as it was a course of action necessitated by persecution

[16] So far, only a few book-length studies have dealt substantially with the subject of toleration (or the lack thereof) in early modern drama: see Walsh; Sokol; Richard Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare;* and Knapp. Sokol's *Shakespeare and Tolerance* features only one chapter on religious toleration as such, which is primarily concerned with religious allusions and jokes. Walsh's *Unsettled Toleration* offers the most comprehensive discussion of toleration on the Shakespearean stage to date and does so largely from a socio-historical perspective on religious coexistence on the grassroots level as a form of everyday ecumenicity. Richard Wilson's *Secret Shakespeare* places Shakespeare's plays in a contemporary Catholic culture of secrecy and dissimulation in the face of state-sponsored persecution. In contrast to Walsh and Wilson, in the present work I approach religious pluralism and its discontents primarily through the lens of intellectual history rather than social and political history. I am also fundamentally concerned with the meta-theatrical significance of representing religious dissimulation on stage. Jeffrey Knapp's *Shakespeare's Tribe* offers an important conceptual model for this approach in that it emphasises the affinities between the theatre, with its reliance on dissimulation, and the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity. That being said, in this book I aim to complicate this link to a greater degree than Knapp's work might suggest, pay greater attention to nonconformist drama, and argue that the theatre was not generally predisposed, by virtue of its ontological and institutional status, to one particular religio-political outlook.

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and chosen by religious minorities as an alternative to legal discrimination in the form of fines, imprisonment, or even martyrdom. Second, religious dissimulation could be the *object* of intolerance. It was regularly condemned by the leaders of persecuted minorities as an intolerable compromise with the truth and occasionally also attacked by the persecuting church or state, when ecclesiastical dignitaries or secular magistrates were not satisfied with outward compliance and at pains to discover and penalise even inward dissent. Finally, if the core of toleration is the refusal to act against views or practices that one disapproves of, religious dissimulation can be viewed as a form of toleration in itself. Religious dissimulation often amounted to an outward acceptance of the official state religion, which members of religious minorities may have disapproved of but nonetheless did not oppose and even outwardly conformed to. This reciprocal relationship between toleration and conformity is evident, for instance, in Erasmus' explanation to Luther in *Hyperaspistes I* as to why he never left the Church of Rome, despite the many faults he found with it: 'I know that in the church which you call papistical there are many with whom I am not pleased, but I see such persons also in your church . . . Therefore I will put up with this church until I see a better one, and it will have to put up with me until I become better'.[17] As Erasmus' pointed chiasm suggests, peaceful coexistence requires a willingness to compromise not only on the part of the established order but also on the part of those who may feel alienated from it in one way or another.

Calling such conformity 'toleration' may seem counter-intuitive. After all, the often drastic measures by means of which persecuting states sought to pressure dissenters into conformity do not seem to have left much of a choice. However, there *were* various options for dissenters, ranging from martyrdom over exile to different forms of more or less comprehensive conformity. The agency of religious minorities should not be downplayed and certainly was not downplayed by early modern theologians and political theorists, who implicitly acknowledged this agency by bothering at all to address the question of how religious minorities should behave towards the established order from a wide range of theological and political perspectives.

In what follows, I will first briefly discuss why religious dissimulation was such a contentious practice for the early moderns and how the controversies surrounding it were informed by early modern views on lying, which differ significantly from present-day views on the subject.

[17] CWE 76:117.

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In a second step, I will give an account of the various points of contact between debates on the legitimacy of religious dissimulation and debates on the legitimacy of theatrical dissimulation. Plays that stage religious dissimulation as their subject matter are therefore, as I argue throughout this book, also legible as meta-theatrical reflections on the political and religious implications of their medium. I will conclude this introduction with a brief overview of the following chapters and a clarification of a number of pertinent terminological questions.

In some ways, the dilemma of early modern dissenters who had to choose between lying or suffering adverse consequences for their beliefs has become incomprehensible to us. What duty could there possibly be to be truthful towards persecutors and tyrants? Most of us would likely agree with Theodor W. Adorno: 'An appeal to truth is scarcely a prerogative of a society which dragoons its members to own up the better to hunt them down. It ill befits universal untruth to insist on particular truth, while immediately converting it into its opposite'.[18] In the seventeenth century, Milton puts forward a similar argument in *De Doctrina Christiana*:

> [W]e are commanded to tell the truth; but to whom? Not to a public enemy, not to a mad person, not to a violent one, not to an assassin, but to a neighbour, namely [someone] with whom we have a bond of peace and righteous fellowship. But now, if we are commanded to tell the truth solely to a neighbour, we are certainly not forbidden to tell even a lie, whenever necessary, to those who do not deserve the name of neighbour.[19]

However, Milton's view that the legitimacy of lying depended on concrete social or political contexts, was by no means representative for the early modern period, when the question of lying carried significant metaphysical weight. As Aquinas puts it in the *Summa theologiae*, 'a lie has the quality of sinfulness not merely as being something damaging to a neighbour, but as being disordered in itself'.[20] Since '[w]ords by their nature' are 'signs of thought, it is contrary to their nature and out of order for anyone to convey in words something other than what he thinks'; hence, 'lying is inherently evil'.[21] Protestant theologians such as Pietro Martire Vermigli followed suit and similarly characterised lying as 'an abuse of signes. And for so much as it is not lawfull to abuse the gifts of GOD: a lie is also understood to be forbidden'.[22] In other words, lying is a violation of language itself.

For Latin Christianity, the parameters of the moral discussion of lying and dissimulation had been set by Augustine in his two treatises on the subject,

[18] Adorno, *Minima moralia* no. 9. [19] Milton 2.13. [20] Aquinas 2.2.110.3. [21] Ibid.
[22] Vermigli 2.13.31.

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*On Lying* (*De Mendacio*) and *Against Lying* (*Contra Mendacium*). Augustine categorically denied Milton's proposition that we owe truth only to those 'with whom we have a bond of peace and righteous fellowship'[23] and showed no tolerance for lies under any circumstances, even 'if a man should flee to you who, by your lie, can be saved from death'.[24] In his typology of lies, Augustine condemns in particular 'that which is uttered in the teaching of religion' as 'a deadly one which should be avoided and shunned from afar'.[25] Early modern theologians, such as Vermigli, agreed that the most heinous lies pertain to 'matter of religion, doctrine, and godlinesse: for in no other thing can guile be more hurtfull and pernicious. For if we shall erre therein, we be cast from euerlasting felicitie'.[26]

At the same time, however, it was religion that caused people to lie and dissemble about their personal convictions on a massive scale in the religious conflicts and persecutions in post-Reformation Europe – a crisis that was only exacerbated by the charge of idolatry that was at stake in 'false' worship.[27] Few sixteenth-century theologians were as concerned about this phenomenon as Jean Calvin, who left an indelible mark on subsequent discussions of religious dissimulation. The French reformer had emigrated to Protestant Basel in 1534, and in numerous treatises from the mid-1530s onwards he admonished his French fellow-Protestants to follow his example and flee from idolatry rather than conform to the abominable sacrifice of the Mass. In his most famous treatise on the subject, his *Excuse à Messieurs les Nicodémites* (1544), Calvin discusses the term 'Nicodemism' at length.[28] According to Calvin,[29] the so-called Nicodemites claimed to imitate the Biblical Nicodemus, who visited Jesus at night, but did not openly confess him (John 3:1–2). As Calvin points out, however, Nicodemus eventually came out of his 'cachette'[30] and asked Pilatus, together with Joseph of Arimathea, for Christ's body in order to inter him (John 19:39–42).[31] When Calvin labelled religious dissemblers 'Nicodemites', he evidently did so in an ironic and derogatory fashion.[32]

[23] Compare with Augustine, *Treatises* 127. [24] Ibid. 66–67. [25] Ibid. 86.
[26] Vermigli 2.13.31.
[27] On Protestant, especially Calvinist, criticism of religious dissimulation as a form of idolatry, see Eire, *War Against the Idols* 195–275.
[28] The term 'Nicodemite' appears to have been in use already since the 1520s. See Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism' 46–7.
[29] CO 6:608. [30] CO 6:608. [31] Compare with CO 6:609.
[32] However, reality was more complicated. Calvin and Théodore de Bèze likewise resorted to dissimulation and deceit in their clandestine ministry to French Protestant congregations. As Jon Balserak has shown, 'Calvin designed Geneva's ministry to France in such a way that it systematically employed falsehood and dissembling to hide what they were doing from the French authorities and probably

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Calvin's main target was the network of evangelicals in the orbit of Marguerite de Navarre, who were dedicated to reforming the Church piecemeal from within.[33] That is to say, Calvin was attacking a competing vision of French reform. However, it would be unduly limiting to conceive of Nicodemism in such historically and politically circumscribed terms. Carlos Eire has argued that Nicodemism was rather a practice than an ideology, that it 'was caused just as much by fear and confusion as it might have been by theoretical considerations'.[34] Later studies, especially Zagorin's *Ways of Lying* (1990), have further shown that early modern Nicodemites, when they felt a need to justify their behaviour, could fall back on exegetical and ethical traditions that long predated the Reformation and complicate the hegemony of Augustinian intransigence on the subject of lying.[35] In early modern Europe, dissimulation was accordingly practised and rationalised by a wide range of confessionally disparate groups, including Protestants, but also Jews, Catholics, and religious radicals of any kind. It therefore makes sense to conceptualise it as a cross-confessional phenomenon. Hence, I apply the term 'Nicodemism' not only to Protestants, in France or elsewhere, but also to crypto-Catholics and other dissenters who dissembled their faith.[36]

Not only practitioners but also opponents of Nicodemism employed similar arguments across the confessional spectrum. Sometimes, texts with a significant anti-Nicodemite component could travel across confessional boundaries with remarkable ease, as is the case with Robert Southwell's poem *Saint Peter's Complaint* (1595).[37] The Jesuit Southwell presumably meant to warn fellow-Catholics against conforming with the Church of England with his prosopopoetic resurrection of the Biblical arch-Nicodemite 'that did his God forsweare' (l. 58). However, the poem also enjoyed remarkable success among Protestant readers and was even

from the Nicodemites as well. Indeed, their ministry was, by their own standards of honesty, as mendacious as that of the Nicodemites' (99). As we shall see, a similar ambivalence towards dissimulation is evident in Jesuit missionaries to Elizabethan England, who condemned Nicodemism but simultaneously resorted to strategies of deception, such as disguise, the use of pseudonyms, equivocation, and mental reservation, in order to pursue their ministry.

[33] Reid 2:550–63. [34] Eire, 'Calvin and Nicodemism' 67.

[35] The Greek fathers and Jerome, Origen's great Latin mediator, tended to take a less severe stance on lying and dissimulation, which found a notable sixteenth-century proponent in Erasmus. See Ramsey; compare with Bietenholz; Trapman. For medieval casuistical thought on lying, which was to play a particularly important role for Catholic dissimulation, see further Corran.

[36] The most important study on early modern Nicodemism to date remains Zagorin. For good overviews, see also Eliav-Feldon 16–67; MacCulloch, *Silence* 163–90. For the English context, see further Overell.

[37] Southwell, *Poems*.

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reprinted by Robert Waldegrave, whose Puritan credentials are attested by his involvement in the Marprelate Controversy.[38] If the hotter sort of Catholics and Protestants could agree on one thing, it was that there could be no compromise with the other side. In his *Epistle of comfort* (c. 1587), for instance, Southwell demonstrates his thorough knowledge of Protestant anti-Nicodemite writers such as Calvin and Vermigli, whose argumentation he claims to find convincing: 'And albeit their reasons were misapplied in the particular churche, to which they proued it vnlawfull to resorte: Yet are they very sufficient and forcible to confirme that the repayring to a false church in deed, is most sinnfull and damnable'.[39] As I argue especially in Chapter 7, such confessional parallels in anti-Nicodemite discourses must be taken into consideration when assessing the confessional scope of a play like Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, which is as much concerned with Catholic as with Puritan nonconformity.

## Anti-theatricality and Religious Dissimulation

Early modern opposition to the theatre had many reasons and was motivated by a wide range of ideological perspectives. Few of them have aged well, and modern scholarship has often found it difficult not to dismiss the majority of anti-theatrical writing as the product of an irrational and fanatic prejudice that ought to be pathologised rather than analysed. However, as Kent R. Lehnhof insists in his important critique of Barish's *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (1981) and Laura Levine's *Men in Women's Clothing* (1994), anti-theatricality was not informed by 'outlandish beliefs about the self'.[40] On the contrary, 'the conceptualization of human nature that informs the antitheatrical tracts is recognizably Protestant and culturally dominant in early modern England'.[41] And while Jonas Barish opines that anti-theatricality 'seems too deep-rooted, too widespread, too resistant to changes of place and time to be ascribed entirely, or even mainly, to social, political, or economic factors' and that it 'seems to precede all attempts to explain or rationalize it',[42] Lisa A. Freeman questions this. Instead, she calls for a more localised study of anti-theatricality that takes into account 'the actual politics that govern these ostensibly aesthetic and moral debates'.[43] One of the aims of

[38] For the appeal of Southwell's *Saint Peter's Complaint* to Protestant readers, see Snyder.
[39] Southwell, *Epistle of comfort* 173. [40] Lehnhof 231. [41] Ibid. [42] Barish 116–17.
[43] Freeman, *Antitheatricality* 2.

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this book is therefore to reconstruct the Nicodemite context that was at least implicitly – and often also explicitly – at stake in pro- and anti-theatrical perspectives on the issue of dissimulation.

One of the most significant arguments against the theatre that is difficult to accept from a modern perspective is the charge of lying. While dissimulation is an indispensable aspect of acting, its legitimacy was by no means taken for granted. In *Against Lying*, Augustine famously defined lying as 'a false signification told with desire to deceive'[44] – a definition that should easily acquit actors, whose purpose was entertainment and not actual deception. In his other treatise, *On Lying*, however, Augustine offered another definition of the liar as one 'who holds one opinion in his mind and who gives expression to another through words or any other outward manifestation',[45] which was further elaborated by Aquinas[46] and equally prominent in the sixteenth century. In this definition, the focus lies not on deception but on the split between inwardness and outwardness as such. If lying was indeed to be defined as a disjunction between inward thoughts and outward expression, the theatre was not so easily off the hook. Theatrical fictions might be considered what Augustine defines in *On Lying* as comparatively harmless 'jocose lies', which 'are accompanied by a very evident lack of intention to deceive'.[47] However, judgement on jocose lies varied considerably in the early modern period.

Vermigli, for instance, considered the jocose lie to possess 'but a small and slender nature of a lie: for so much as the falshood is straitwaie found out, neither can it be long hidden from the hearers'.[48] Bullinger, on the other hand, considered lies for the sake of 'pastime or pleasure' as 'a signe of very great lightnesse: which the Apostle [Eph. 5] misliketh in the faithful'.[49] Some moralists and anti-theatrical writers showed even less tolerance for jocose lies. Stephen Gosson, for instance, explicitly refers to Aquinas' *quaestio* on lying in order to denounce the trade of acting: 'euery man must show himselfe outwardly to be such as in deed he is . . . to declare our selues by wordes or by gestures to be otherwise then we are is an act executed where it should not, therefore a lye'.[50] Critics of the theatre found dissimulation problematic in its own right, even if it was not actually meant to deceive anyone. The mere split between inward- and outwardness and its spiritual and moral implications were found to be just as disturbing.

Arguably the most important study that has contextualised early modern drama in contemporary debates on religious dissimulation is Jeffrey

[44] Augustine, *Treatises* 160. [45] Ibid. 55. [46] Aquinas 2.2.110.1. [47] Augustine, *Treatises* 54.
[48] Vermigli 2.13.32. [49] Bullinger, *Decades* 321. [50] Gosson E5r.

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Knapp's *Shakespeare's Tribe* (2002). Knapp argues that, with its tolerance for spiritual hypocrisy, the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity provided the theatre people with 'a golden opportunity to extenuate their professional stake in "hypocrisy"'.[51] Knapp accordingly describes a pro-theatrical tradition that identified with the allegedly inclusive position of the Church of England and its tolerance for religious dissimulation. However, a significant segment of English society, which cherished the nonconformist legacy of the Protestants who had gone into exile when England was briefly re-Catholicised under Queen Mary (1553–8), had little patience for 'cold statute protestants'. An older and complementary scholarly tradition that associated anti-theatricality with Puritanism therefore has to be given its due as well.

A substantial argument for the supposed link between Puritanism and the opposition to the stage was first put forward in Elbert N. S. Thompson's *The Controversy between the Puritans and the Stage* (1903). Even though it is widely accepted that opposition to the stage was not the exclusive privilege of Puritanism, much criticism still rests on the assumption that the opposition to the stage was somehow related to the opposition to the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity.[52] Jonas Barish, for instance, states: 'Not only the Puritan attack on the stage, but the Puritan attack on the liturgy, it may be suspected, drew strength from the belief in a total sincerity. Worship, to be genuine, could only be a direct translation of one's inner self'.[53] Ramie Targoff has likewise seen the closest connection between nonconformity and opposition to the stage in their shared imperative of a correspondence between inwardness and outwardness.[54] Pointing to more concrete debates, Adrian Streete has further argued that the anti-theatrical unease with disguise, especially cross-dressing, can be fruitfully related to the Puritan controversy over liturgical vestments as an expression of a Protestant crisis of signification and authority.[55] Remarkably, the Puritan *Admonition to the Parliament* (1572) even explicitly linked the loathed but common preaching by the book to acting: 'Reading is not feeding, but it is as evill as playing upon a stage, and worse too. For players yet learne their partes without booke, and these [i.e. the preachers], a manye of them can scarcely read

[51] Knapp 19–20.
[52] For a convincing critique of the equation of anti-theatricality with Puritanism, see Heinemann 18–36; for the role of religion in anti-theatricality more generally, see Shell, *Shakespeare and Religion* 30–78; for a more general review of earlier scholarship on the subject, see also Postlewait.
[53] Barish 95.
[54] Targoff, 'Performance of Prayer'. For the concern with religious sincerity in anti-theatricality, see also Stelling, *Religious Conversion* 42–56.
[55] Streete, 129–39.

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within booke'.[56] As such debates suggest, the Puritan critique of the theatre is to be viewed against the larger backdrop of their religious and political programme and their attitudes towards conformity and the purity of worship, which so often set them at odds with the Church of England.

In fact, there were remarkably close parallels between anti-theatrical and anti-Nicodemite discourses. In *Playes Confuted in fiue Actions* (1582), for instance, Gosson objects that invoking pagan deities on stage amounts to idolatry, even if such prayers are not spoken in earnest. In words that could just as well have been spoken by Calvin against the Nicodemites, Gosson declares: 'if we make a diuorce betwene the tongue & the heart, honouringe the gods of the heathens in lips, & in iesture, not in thought, yet it is idolatrie, because we do that which is quite contrary to the outward profession of our faith'.[57] While much scholarship on early modern anti-theatricality has emphasised Protestant iconophobia, to use Patrick Collinson's term, as the major objection to the theatre, the separation between inwardness and outwardness seems equally pressing in Gosson's attack on idolatry.[58] Significantly, Gosson's distinction between heart and tongue is not only a theatrical category but also central to early modern debates on Nicodemism. Whereas Nicodemites argued that God is concerned with the believer's heart and not their outward profession, anti-Nicodemites insisted on the imperative of aligning heart and tongue.[59]

Immediately after the passage just cited, Gosson goes on to invoke three prominent Old Testament heroes: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's idol (Daniel 3) 'because the outwarde shew, must represent that which is within'. As Gosson declares, notably in an anti-theatrical context, their 'example is set dowe [*sic*] as a rule for vs to followe'.[60] Gosson here marshals role models and arguments against the theatre, which his contemporaries would likely have recognised from debates on Nicodemism. For instance, Gosson sounds remarkably

[56] *Puritan Manifestoes* 22. Ministers often did not compose their own sermons because they were either not qualified or not meant to do so. In his *Basilikon Doron*, for instance, James I admonishes his son to 'tak[e] specially heede, that [preachers] vague not from their text in the Pulpit: and if euer ye woulde haue peace in your land, suffer them not to meddle in that place with the estate or policie' (James Stuart, *Political Works* 39). The subordinate role of the sermon was not only a principled decision in favour of uniformity but also conditioned by practical necessities, especially the lack of qualified preachers. A preaching license required an advanced university degree, which ruled out a large proportion of the Elizabethan clergy. Non-preaching clergy read from *The Book of Homilies* instead of composing their own sermons. See Targoff, *Common Prayer* 42–3.

[57] Gosson D8r.

[58] See Collinson, *Birthpangs of Protestant England* ch. 4. The extent of such iconophobia has been questioned more recently. Compare with Hamling and Willis.

[59] See Zagorin 25–6; Overell 32.

[60] Gosson D8r.

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similar to *The Temporysour* by Wolfgang Musculus, a series of anti-Nicodemite dialogues that were re-published during the Puritan subscription crisis in 1584, when godly ministers were faced with the choice of conformity with the Prayer Book or suspension from the ministry. As Eusebius, one of the interlocutors of the dialogues, tells the eponymous protagonist of *The Temporysour*, 'herein thou thinkest thy self to be excused, in asmuch as thou doest onely commit these thinges [i.e. participation in idolatrous rites] outwardlie, without hauing any reputacion or good opinion of the said seruices'.[61] However, Eusebius confronts the would-be Nicodemite with the example of 'the three young men',[62] namely, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who would rather be burnt than participate in idolatrous rites. In one of Calvin's anti-Nicodemites sermons, which was re-published in 1584 by Anthony Munday of all people, the Genevan reformer too cites Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in order to buttress his argument that 'Idolatrie is an outwarde action against Gods honour, yea, although it proceed not from the wyll and purpose of the minde, but be onelie colourable and feined'.[63] The same

[61] Musculus E2v. [62] Ibid.

[63] Calvin, *Two godly and learned sermons* C2v. Munday's edition is an excerpt from an original quaternion of sermons by Calvin, which turned out to become 'the single most popular anti-Nicodemite work by any Continental author translated into English' (Woo 104). It has been suggested that Munday published the sermons in order to bolster his Protestant credentials after his stay in Rome. See Turner 74–5; Hamilton, *Munday and the Catholics* 58–9; Woo 125–33. Quite remarkably, however, the anti-Nicodemite imperative of Calvin's sermons stands in stark contrast with Munday's frank admission of his Nicodemism on the continent. As Munday writes in *The English Romayne Lyfe*, published two years earlier, 'he that is in Roome, especially in the Colledge among the Schollers: must liue as he may, not as he will, fauour comes by conformitie, and death by obstinacie' (46). As for his critics, Munday claims that 'they would be as ready to doo any thing for the safegard of their liues, as I was' (47). In addition, Munday's publication of Calvin's sermons is hardly, as Hamilton has claimed, 'unambiguously a work that would please the government' (*Munday and the Catholics* 59). It rather seems to have been an attempt to capitalise on intra-Protestant tensions and cater to a recent demand for anti-Nicodemite literature among the hotter sort of Protestants at the onset of Whitgift's tenure. According to the title page, 'these Sermons haue long lyen hidden in silence, and many godly and religious persons, haue beene very desirous of them' – which conveniently passes over the fact that the sermons had already been made available to English readers in 1579 in a complete translation by the Puritan spokesman John Field and in 1581 in a partial edition by Robert Waldegrave, who would later lend his types to Martin Marprelate. The sermons' anti-Nicodemite stance and the Puritan sympathies invoked by their publishing history therefore hardly give Munday's volume an air of government propaganda. This impression is only strengthened by Munday's dedication of the sermons to the Earl of Leicester, England's foremost Puritan patron, whom Munday praises in his preface as 'a refuge to the Godly, & from time to time a ready defender' (Aiiiv). At the time of the most determined attempt to enforce Puritan conformity so far and growing tensions between Leicester and Archbishop Whitgift, the driving force behind the increasing strictures on the Puritan movement, such a dedication can hardly be read as anything else but a pro-Puritan declaration. However, what makes Munday's apparent support of Puritan nonconformity all the more disturbing is that he later changed sides once more when he acted as a pursuivant for Whitgift in the hunt for Martin Marprelate (see Chapter 3). Whatever we are to

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models were also invoked on the Catholic side. According to the marginal note on Daniel 3:6 in the Douay-Rheims Bible (Old Testament 1609–10), Nebuchadnezzar's injunction offers a precedent for the plight of English Catholics: 'Now in England personal presence at heretical seruice or sermon is a distinctiue signe of conformitie to the protestants pretended religion'.[64] Considering such discursive parallels, there is a case to be made that early modern views on theatricality and religious dissimulation drew on common Biblical and theological habits of thought.

However, a simple equation of anti-theatricality with nonconformity does not do justice to the ideological complexities and ambiguities of the early modern stage, and it would be misleading to divide the practitioners of the theatre and its opponents into clearly demarcated confessional camps with specific attitudes towards both theatrical and religious dissimulation. Puritans were not en bloc opposed to the theatre. Several of them wrote plays and acted in them too, and theatre audiences were a good deal more diverse in religious orientation than has previously been assumed.[65] A remarkable Puritan specimen of nonconformist drama is provided, for instance, by Nathaniel Woodes' *Conflict of Conscience* (1581), which recounts the apostasy and suicidal despair of the Italian lawyer Francesco Spiera, who recanted his beliefs before the Inquisition in Venice in 1548 and quickly became one of the most notorious Protestant exampla of the fatal consequences of Nicodemism.[66]

While there is no evidence that *The Conflict of Conscience* was ever performed, let alone intended for the commercial stage, Margot Heinemann has made a case in *Puritanism and the Theatre* (1980) that there was a dramatic tradition in sympathy with the Puritan parliamentary opposition, which was most prominently embodied by Thomas Middleton. In *The Drama of Dissent* (1986), Ritchie D. Kendall moreover reconstructs a distinctive 'poetics of dissent' that can be traced from the Lollards to the Elizabethan Puritan movement.[67] As Kendall argues, nonconformist literature in general reveals

make of Munday's curious excursion into the field of anti-Nicodemite literature, the contradictions in his attitude towards the theatre as well as towards Nicodemism certainly alert us to the fact that fluency in the idiom of authenticity is by no means to be taken at face value.

[64] Douay-Rheims Old Testament 2:777.

[65] A good overview of the abundant evidence for both Puritan and Catholic interest in the public stage, as well as a critical discussion of the scholarly traditions that have tended to sideline such evidence, is provided by Gurnis, *Mixed Faith and Shared Feeling*, especially ch. 1. On Puritan playwrights and actors in particular, see ibid. 71–6.

[66] On Spiera's English reception, see MacDonald; on the Puritan context of Woodes' *Conflict of Conscience*, see Ide, 'Nathaniel Woodes'.

[67] Kendall 5.

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'an inherently theatrical imagination' that was 'grounded in ritual patterns of self-dramatization'.[68] However, Kendall too perceives in the plays of John Bale, for instance, an 'ambivalent theatricality',[69] a dissonance in the formulation of a nonconformist impulse in a medium that relies on dissimulation. Kendall accordingly speaks of a 'stratagem of self-exorcism',[70] when Catholicism was represented on the Protestant stage as nothing but theatrical disguise and hypocrisy. That being said, London's public stages were by no means the exclusive domain of a supposed mainstream English Protestantism, perhaps with the odd trace of nostalgia for England's Catholic past, but addressed the plight of contemporary Protestant as well as Catholic minorities with a remarkable sense of urgency and vitality.

In turn, a negative attitude towards religious dissimulation was not limited to the godly but could also manifest itself in government policies, which routinely flouted Queen Elizabeth's alleged refusal to make windows into men's hearts, as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 1. Unease with dissimulation in general was deeply ingrained in early modern culture beyond sectarian divisions. Hence, it need not surprise us that anti-theatrical writers such as Philip Stubbes and Gosson were not Puritan nonconformists, even though they denounced theatres as 'Schooles or Seminaries of pseudo christianitie'[71] and urged their readers 'to avoide euery thing that hindereth the outwarde profession of Christianitie'.[72] Paradoxically, this condemnation of dissimulation was sometimes even shared by playwrights who otherwise showed little sympathy for nonconformity.[73] As Lieke Stelling and others have further observed with regard to religious conversion, 'early modern English playwrights used their creative imagination to undermine, circumvent and mock changes of religious group identity'.[74] Even on stage, the performance of religious identity was habitually exposed as dissimulation – as nothing but theatre.

## Puritan Hypocrisy and Theatrical Self-Fashioning

Tellingly, attacks on the stage were rarely ever countered with a defence of dissimulation. Instead of justifying dissimulation, apologists of the stage often projected the charge of dissimulation on the Puritans, supposedly the worst hypocrites of all, and thereby implicitly acknowledged that

[68] Ibid. 8, 9. [69] Ibid. 8. [70] Ibid. 118. [71] Stubbes 1:145. [72] Gosson B8r.

[73] On this point, see, for example, Wikander, *Fangs of Malice* xv–xvi; Righter 171–91. It has also more generally been recognised, already by Barish (117–22) and Levine (134–6), that the practitioners and apologists of the theatre frequently shared many of their opponents' misgivings.

[74] Stelling, *Religious Conversion* 122.

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dissimulation was indeed to be condemned. Even though anti-theatricality was not the exclusive prerogative of the godly, the Puritan attack on the stage loomed large in the rhetorical self-fashioning of some of the theatre's apologists. A number of Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights even positively thrived on an often stylised, antagonistic relationship with their supposed Puritan critics, whose alleged hypocrisy and duplicity they dissected with such great gusto. In his *Apology for Actors* (1612), for instance, Heywood claims that he is responding to 'the sundry exclamations of many seditious sectists in this age',[75] and, in *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson sets up an opposition 'between the hypocrites and us' (5.5.26–7),[76] that is, between the Puritans and the theatre. In amplifying and generalising the Puritan opposition to the stage, the defenders of the early modern stage may well have been aware that they were taking some licence with the truth. In *An Almond for a Parrat* (1590), for instance, Thomas Nashe introduces Stubbes – who wrote against the immorality of the theatre but was hardly a Puritan revolutionary – as a potential ally for the militant Martin Marprelate. In a vicious character assassination, Nashe portrays Stubbes as a godly widow hunter who attempts to seduce his target with 'a spicke and spanne new Geneua Bible' in hand and is keen to 'put a new spirite into her, by carnall copulation, and so engraft her into the fellowshippe of the faithfull'.[77] As Nashe's exaggerated denunciation of Stubbes as a Puritan hypocrite suggests, the critical tradition of associating moral reform and anti-theatrical sentiment with Puritanism may be misleading – but not entirely groundless. Even though it is a distortion, it is a distortion that was already actively cultivated by early modern apologists and practitioners of the theatre.

However, as Jonson and his contemporaries must have known, the opposition between the theatre and hypocritical Puritans is a false one. The word 'hypocrite' itself derives from a certain type of actor in ancient Greek drama. William Prynne, for instance, observes in his *Histrio-mastix*: 'For what else is hypocrisie in the proper signification of the word, but the acting of anothers part or person on the Stages: or what else is an hypocrite, in his true etimologie, but a Stage-player, or one who acts another part: as sundry Authors and Grammarians teach us: hence that common epithite in our Latine Authors: Histrionica hypocrisis'.[78] If the Puritans too were hypocrites, they were not so fundamentally different from the theatre people whom they attacked. Indeed, the typical Jonsonian stage Puritan is a consummate performer who keeps up an outward pretence of sanctity while secretly indulging in all sorts of debauchery. Jonson accordingly suggests in *The Alchemist* that

[75] Heywood, *Apology* B1r. [76] CEWBJ 4:412. [77] Nashe 3:357. [78] Prynne 158.

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the Puritan opposition to the stage was not heartfelt but entirely opportunistic and driven by materialistic considerations. Subtle promises his godly clients that once he has made them rich, they will no longer have a need to '[r]ail against plays to please the alderman / Whose daily custard you devour' (3.2.89–90).[79] The implication of this passage, namely, that anti-theatricalists strove only 'to please the alderman' without any actual animosity against the stage, is not entirely unfounded. Especially in the 1580s, a number of 'turncoat players', including Munday, Gosson, and William Rankins, were probably commissioned by the City to write against the theatre.[80] Although he rails against plays, Jonson's hypocritical stage Puritan actually thrives on performance, even if it happens to be a performance of anti-theatrical indignation, just as much as the theatre does.

We thus arrive, as Huston Diehl has noted, at the curious conclusion that 'in their insistence that the distinctive language, behavior, and beliefs of puritans are nothing more than the trappings of a theatrical role, [playwrights] rely on an equally well-established anti-theatrical stereotype of the player as a protean figure with no moral center, that is, a shape shifter and a conartist'.[81] What, then, prompted the theatre's apologists to stylise, if not invent, their alleged Puritan opponents in a manner that could not but reflect badly on their own Protean trade? Why were they so keen to censure the Puritans' habits of dissimulation if that was the very trait which the two groups shared? In his essay 'On Giving the Lie', Michel de Montaigne reflects on the strange paradox that the accusation of lying should cause such outrage in an age of universal dissimulation and conjectures: 'It seems that by resenting the accusation [of lying] and growing angry about it we unload some of the guilt; we are guilty, in fact, but at least we condemn it for show'.[82] Similar mechanisms of compensation and displacement seem to be at work in some defences of the theatre, where the condemnation of the hypocritical Puritan served to isolate and externalise one of the most problematic aspects of the theatre, namely, its reliance on dissimulation. It seems to be with this intention that the commendatory poems in Heywood's *Apology for Actors*, for instance, transfer the charge of dissimulation and hypocrisy to the Puritans. In one of the poems, Richard Perkins insists that he 'was neuer Puritannicall' and declares:

> I loue no publicke soothers, priuate scorners,
> That raile 'gainst letchery, yet loue a harlot.

[79] CEWBJ 3:633. [80] See Hill, '"He hath changed his coppy"'.
[81] Diehl, 'Disciplining Puritans and Players' 90. [82] De Montaigne 756.

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> When I drinke, 'tis in sight, and not in corners:
> I am no open Saint, and secret varlet.[83]

Similarly, Christopher Beeston lets the reader 'know I am none of these / that in-ly loue what out-ly I detest'.[84] If actors commit the sin of lying since 'by outwarde signes' they show 'them selues otherwise then they are',[85] what about the Puritans?

Defenders of the theatre were indeed swift to expose and amplify any lack of sincerity that they perceived in their opponents, even when doing so amounted to an implicit acknowledgement of the ideal of sincerity that undergirded the case against theatrical dissimulation. In his reply to Gosson's *Schoole of abuses* (1579), Thomas Lodge observes that if poets are liars, Gosson is hardly any better: 'Poets you say vse coullors to couer ther incouiences [*sic*], and wittie sentences to burnish theyr bawdery, and you diuinite to couer your knauerye. But tell mee truth *Gosson* speakest thou as thou thinkest?'.[86] There is indeed good reason to believe that Gosson, a former dramatist himself, wrote against the theatre for opportunistic reasons rather than out of heartfelt repentance for his former life of sin.[87] As Lodge therefore suggests, opponents of the theatre like Gosson are the true hypocrites and religious dissemblers: 'vnder your fare show of conscience take heede you cloake not your abuse . . . I feare me you will be politick wyth Machauel not zealous as a prophet'.[88] Similarly, when Nashe discusses Stubbes in his *Anatomie of Absurditie* (1589), he deflates the latter's alleged pretensions to holiness by comparing them to the very theatrical illusion which Stubbes censured so vigorously: 'But as the Stage player is nere the happier, because hee represents oft times the persons of mightie men, as of Kings & Emperours, so I account such men neuer the holier, because they place praise in painting foorth other mens imperfections'.[89] As Alexandra Walsham has shown, Stubbes, the godly moralist, does indeed bear traces of a literary persona, designed with an eye to the considerable demand for godly literature on the Elizabethan book market.[90] Launching into a high-flown diatribe against hypocrisy, Nashe accordingly excoriates Stubbes' moralising as a mere 'pretence of puritie' and 'glose of godlines'.[91] Again, Nashe intimates, the true hypocrites are to be found not in the theatre but among the godly who claim to disdain it.

[83] Heywood, *Apology* a3r. [84] Ibid. [85] Gosson E5r. [86] Lodge 4.
[87] For the evidence that Gosson's *School of Abuse* (1579) was the product of an official commission, see Ringler 24–8.
[88] Lodge 32. [89] Nashe 1:20. [90] Walsham, '"A Glose of Godlines"'. [91] Nashe 1:21.

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By scapegoating alleged Puritan hypocrites and highlighting their sanctimonious dissimulation, the theatre arguably exorcised its own ghosts, its own uneasiness with its Protean mutability, the elusiveness of its formless creations, and its dependence on dissimulation. Tellingly, therefore, no one did more for the establishment of the stage Puritan than Jonson, whose misgivings concerning the theatre were unrivalled among his fellow-playwrights. It may seem ironic that nonconformists, of all people, should be scapegoated as dissemblers, but if even the most committed nonconformists could be proven to be nothing but hypocrites, the theatre could hardly be blamed for turning dissimulation into a profession. Even more, it may be precisely *because* their nonconformist ethos held up such an unflattering mirror to a culture that by and large shared their emphasis on sincerity that the Puritans needed to be cut down to size.

Neither the theatre nor the Church was perfectly at ease with dissimulation, even though it was fundamental to both. In turn, however, such unease with dissimulation could be consciously incorporated into a conception of theatricality as a self-reflexive epistemology of discovery. That is to say, a number of early modern defences of the stage highlight the theatre's ability to pierce through masks and false appearances, to expose hypocrisy, and to make windows into men's hearts. In his dedicatory epistle to *Seneca his tenne tragedies* (1581), Thomas Newton praises Seneca as a writer who 'sensibly, pithily, and bytingly layeth downe the guerdon of filthy lust, cloaked dissimulation & odious treachery: which is the dryft, whervnto he leueleth the whole yssue of ech one of his Tragedies'.[92] In Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, tragedy is similarly credited with an ethos of exposure insofar as it 'openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours'.[93] The theatre, then, could also serve as a forum of discovery, perhaps even a forensic tool to catch the conscience of a king. Heywood makes a similar claim for the popular theatre when he declares 'these exercises [i.e. plays] to haue beene the discouerers of many notorious murders, long concealed from the eyes of the world'.[94] As Heywood proves with several anecdotes,[95] the 'Hamlet effect', the spontaneous confession of a crime that the perpetrator witnesses on stage, is real.[96]

However, this ethos of exposure was by no means always directed against criminals, tyrants, or persecutors of the true faith; it could also be turned

[92] Seneca, *Tenne tragedies* A4r. [93] Sidney 98. [94] Heywood *Apology* G1v. [95] Ibid. G1v–G2v.
[96] For the humanist intellectual background of Heywood's claim, see Lewis 196–7.

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against religious minorities themselves. In Middleton's *The Puritan* (1607), for instance, Serjeant Ravenshaw declares: ''tis natural in us, you know, to hate scholars, natural. Besides, they will publish our imperfections, knaveries, and conveyances upon scaffolds and stages',[97] to which Serjeant Puttock replies: 'Ay, and spitefully too. Troth, I have wondered how the slaves could see into our breasts so much when our doublets are buttoned with pewter'.[98] Pieboard, the scholar/playwright in question, does indeed make windows into men's hearts when he spies on the newly bereft Puritan family in order to capitalise on their pious credulity: 'I laid the hole of mine ear to a hole in the wall and heard 'em make these vows and speak those words upon which I wrought these advantages'.[99] Overhearing their marriage plans (or lack thereof), Pieboard urges the widow and her daughters Frank and Moll to alter their purpose as a means of redeeming their recently deceased husband and father from purgatory. The family is baffled accordingly: 'How knows he that? What, has some devil told him?',[100] 'Strange he should know our thoughts',[101] 'Know our secrets?'.[102] Role-playing and deception are not only a means to conceal secrets but also a means to spy them out. Pieboard serves as a salutary reminder that prominent playwrights such as Munday and Marlowe were also engaged in espionage. This tendency towards a theatricality of exposure also manifests itself, as I will show, in their dramatic work and serves as an important qualification to a theoretical paradigm that squarely associates the theatre with conformity and anti-theatricality with nonconformity.

In this book, I do not aim to give a comprehensive account of religious dissimulation in early modern drama; rather, I offer six in-depth case studies in order to highlight the ideological diversity of the early modern stage and the wide variety of positions it could adopt towards religious dissimulation. Hence, the corpus of plays that I have chosen covers a wide spectrum of confessional positions, ranging from Puritan nonconformity to Catholic recusancy. It includes new readings of canonical authors such as Shakespeare, Jonson, and Marlowe, but also turns to less-well-known plays such as *Sir John Oldcastle* and *Sir Thomas More*, to reconstruct their previously underappreciated religious and political radicalism. All plays discussed at length in this book date from c. 1590 to 1614, a period when questions of Nicodemism and nonconformity became pressing in a way that they had not been since England's return to Catholicism under Mary I. The early 1590s saw the effective demolition of the Elizabethan Puritan

[97] Middleton 3.3.9–12. [98] Ibid. 3.3.13–15. [99] Ibid. 2.1.289–92. [100] Ibid. 2.1.169–70. [101] Ibid. 2.1.171. [102] Ibid. 2.1.180.

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movement as a programme of ecclesiastical reform as well as an unprecedented clampdown on English Catholics in the wake of the Spanish Armada. The succession crisis and the transition from Tudor to Stuart rule inspired a resurgence of theorising about the relations between state authority and dissent and speculations about the possibilities of toleration under a new monarch. Finally, the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 as well as the assassination of the King of France in 1610 by the Catholic François Ravaillac once more raised questions about the relationship between Catholics and the Protestant state with undiminished urgency. All these events and developments left their marks on the plays under discussion here, but inspired very diverse approaches to religious dissent and the implications of theatrical dissimulation for Nicodemism.

Chapter 1 offers a survey of religious dissimulation in early modern England, where questions concerning its legitimacy were, owing to the unpredictable course of the English Reformation(s), arguably more pressing than anywhere else in Europe. While most Catholic and Protestant theological authorities condemned dissimulation in principle, the practice must have been widespread and was perceived, at least by those in power, as a political reality that could not simply be ignored. This chapter outlines both ecclesiological and political justifications for tolerating those who dissembled their faith and argues that their ambivalent status and the often unstable practices of policing such religious dissimulation should be considered a central aspect of early modern approaches to the problem of religious toleration. Religious dissimulation was a highly controversial practice, and toleration for inward dissent was never a given. A wide variety of views on the subject existed among the different religious parties and movements in early modern England and is also reflected in contemporary drama, as the following chapters will demonstrate.

In Chapter 2 I discuss Shakespeare's Falstaff as an anti-martyr in the two parts of *Henry IV* (referred to throughout as *1 Henry IV* (1H4) and *2 Henry IV* (2H4)). The character of Falstaff is very loosely based on the fifteenth-century Lollard martyr John Oldcastle, and several contemporary references attest that Shakespeare's Falstaff was indeed once called Oldcastle in performance. Even though Shakespeare transforms the martyr into a cowardly dissembler, who has very little to do with the Lollard martyr, countless allusions to Oldcastle's martyrdom provide a meaningful interpretative framework for Falstaff's 'better part of valour' (1H4 5.4.118–19). Unlike previous critics, however, I do not contend that Shakespeare mocks the Proto-Protestant as part of a Catholic or anti-Puritan campaign. On the contrary, by contrasting Falstaff with the politically subversive martyr

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figure in *2 Henry IV*, Archbishop Scrope, I suggest that Shakespeare's transformation of the Lollard martyr rather amounts to a defence of the Elizabethan ideal of outward conformity. Falstaff's dissimulation, insofar as it can be read as a rejection of martyrdom, is a form of political obedience. Moreover, I suggest that Falstaff's dissimulation also entails a defence of theatrical dissimulation that aligns Shakespeare's theatre closely with the religious policies of the Elizabethan government.

The dramatic response to Shakespeare's Falstaff, *The First Part of Sir John Oldcastle* (1599), is the subject of Chapter 3 and represents an oppositional perspective on the problem of religious dissent. This perspective can be defined especially by its heightened awareness of the fundamentally contested nature of political loyalty in the case of religious dissent. *Sir John Oldcastle*, which restores the Lollard martyr to his heroic stature, is usually read in terms of a moderate, that is, politically loyal and conformist, form of Puritanism. However, I argue that the play is, in its representation of nonconformity and a conditional form of political obedience, a good deal more radical than is usually assumed. As I further suggest, the play's nonconformist ethos therefore also contributes to a more ambivalent conception of theatricality than the one embodied by Shakespeare's Falstaff.

Chapters 4 and 5 are dedicated to *Sir Thomas More* and Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall*, respectively. Both plays reflect the Catholic outrage over the breakdown of the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity and the various means by which the Elizabethan regime made windows into men's hearts in the late sixteenth century, including espionage, oaths, and torture. The two chapters thus discuss an oppositional stance that is, unlike that of *Oldcastle*, not necessarily nonconformist. *Sir Thomas More* in particular is concerned with silence as a middle ground between truth and dissimulation. However, silence is an option that became increasingly precarious in the persecutory climate of the 1580s and 1590s, as I argue by contextualising the play within contemporary legislative developments that served to penalise silence.

Written during Jonson's Catholic years, *Sejanus His Fall* is likewise a portrayal of a tyrannical regime that aggressively lays claim to the inward secrets of its citizens in a manner that is reminiscent of contemporary Catholic polemics. Like *Sir Thomas More*, *Sejanus* highlights the moral plight of dissenters under a regime that has abandoned toleration for private dissent. Jonson discusses their plight in terms of a subtle treatment of *parrhesia*, the rhetoric of free speech, and in terms of neo-Stoicist moral philosophy and political thought. However, although both plays address a similar dilemma, they offer radically different visions of theatricality. While *Sir Thomas More* can be read as a protracted celebration of the theatre that

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culminates in the performance of martyrdom, *Sejanus* expresses deep distrust in theatricality by evoking the Platonic association of the theatre with tyranny and the inherent theatricality of Machiavellian power politics.

Such ambivalence about theatricality is not necessarily a symptom of an oppositional stance, as I argue in Chapter 6 by contextualising the rise of the stage Machiavel in the suppression of the Elizabethan Puritan movement in the late 1580s and early 1590s. The stage Machiavel of the early 1590s, most prominently embodied by Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, bears traces of anti-Puritan polemics that have been mostly overlooked so far. Hence, the stage Machiavel can be read as a predecessor of the stage Puritan and as a theatrical convention, most notably in his typical revelation of his plans to the audience, which showcases the theatre as an institution that grants access, or rather a fantasy of access, to the inward secrets of religious dissenters. Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* can be read as an expression of such a desire to make windows into men's hearts and as a poetological statement that flaunts the complicity of the theatre in this enterprise.

Chapter 7 focuses on Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, which features a more typical manifestation of the stage Puritan, Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. However, the play's parody of martyrdom is arguably not simply aimed at Puritan dissent but reflects more broadly the discourse of pseudo-martyrdom, to which the Oath of Allegiance controversy had given rise after the Gunpowder Plot, and thus has a significant Catholic subtext. In a second step, I hope to show that, in its concern with liberty, licence, and the authority to judge, the play amounts to a remarkably straightforward plea for royal supremacy and the imperative of outward conformity. In particular, I argue that the notion of Christian liberty, which has been all but ignored in the play's criticism, is crucial to its treatment of Puritan nonconformity as well as its reflections on the theatre itself. While proponents of royal supremacy argued that so-called *adiaphora*, things that are indifferent for salvation and therefore subject to Christian liberty (e.g. clerical vestments), should be subordinated to royal authority, Puritan nonconformists objected that their use should be governed by the standard of edification alone. Significantly, early modern discussions of the legitimacy of the theatre likewise hinged on its status as a thing indifferent. Debates on whether Christian liberty could be enjoyed in going to the theatre or even acting in it thus frequently mirrored debates on nonconformity, and *Bartholomew Fair* consciously aligns the two issues in Busy's revolt against the puppet show at the fair.

Finally, some terminological clarifications are in order, beginning with 'dissimulation'. According to Calvin, '[d]issimulation se commet en cachant

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ce qu'on a dedans le cueur. Simulation est plus, c'est de faire semblant et feindre ce qui n'est point'.[103] That is to say, dissimulation consists in hiding one's real self, whereas simulation consists in pretending to be someone else. For Calvin, this distinction opened the door for certain forms of deception that did not strictly fall under the charge of lying,[104] and it is also of some importance in my reading of *Sir Thomas More* as a reflection on the ethics of silence. In practice, however, simulation and dissimulation are often difficult to separate, and sixteenth-century writers often do not make Calvin's distinction between them. Vermigli, for instance, treats both phenomena under the heading of dissimulation.[105] As for its relationship to lying, Aquinas[106] and Calvin[107] define *simulatio* simply as the non-verbal equivalent of lying. Again, however, sixteenth-century writers often treat verbal and non-verbal forms of deception together and do not consistently distinguish between them terminologically. Unless specified otherwise, I therefore use 'dissimulation' as a general term for all forms of deception that rest on the disjunction between inwardness and outwardness.

In my use of the term 'Puritanism', I am not concerned with a specifically Puritan vision of piety or practical divinity. Neither do I address at large the thorny question of the doctrinal positions of Puritans in relation to the Elizabethan Church of England, an institution that would be more accurately characterised as Zwinglian rather than Calvinist, despite the increasing gravitational pull that Geneva exercised on English minds and the European Reformed tradition in general in the second half of the sixteenth century.[108] Instead, I focus on Puritan discontent with the government, discipline, and liturgy of the Established Church, as it manifested itself in the Presbyterian platform, the call for

[103] CO 6:546. [104] Balserak 82–3. [105] Vermigli 2.13.26. [106] Aquinas 2.2.111.1.
[107] CO 6:546.
[108] The frequent invocation of a supposed Calvinist doctrinal consensus misrepresents what was, not only in its Erastian tendencies (compare with Chapter 1) but also in other respects such as its official reticence on the precise workings of double predestination, a church generally more in tune with Zurich than with Geneva. As Collinson has pointed out, 'English theologians were as likely to lean on Bullinger of Zürich, Musculus of Berne, or Peter Martyr as on Calvin or Beza', and 'if we were to identify one author and one book which represented the centre of the theological gravity of the Elizabethan Church it would not be Calvin's *Institutes* but the *Common Places* of Peter Martyr' ('England and International Calvinism' 214). Calvinism rose to international prominence and influence only after the foundations of the Church of England, in dogma, liturgy, as well as church government, had already been laid under Edward VI. At least institutionally, little allowance was made for the further progress of international Protestant thought in the Church of England after the mid-century, neither with the Elizabethan settlement nor later during Elizabeth's reign. For the importance of Zurich rather than Geneva for the Elizabethan Church of England, see further Collinson, 'England and International Calvinism' 217–18; MacCulloch, 'Latitude'; MacCulloch, *Later Reformation* 65–81; Hampton.

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a preaching ministry, and proposals for further liturgical reform, such as the Puritan rejection of supposedly 'popish' clerical vestments. Such discontent did not necessarily lead to nonconformity but could also be inherent in what Peter Lake has characterised as moderate Puritanism.[109] It is primarily this question, namely, whether Puritans could conform to the Church of England or whether its failure of further reform might not necessitate disobedience to the ecclesiastical hierarchy or even separatism, which lies at the centre of my discussion of Puritanism. In turn, I use the terms 'dissent' and 'dissenter' in a very general sense and with none of its seventeenth-century connotations of separatism. That is to say, I use the term to refer to Puritan as well as to Catholic alienation from the doctrines, liturgy, or government of the Church of England, even if it did not manifest itself in nonconformity.[110]

As for the equally thorny category of 'selfhood' in literary scholarship of the early modern period, I am less concerned with the supposed rise of subjectivity or individuality than with selfhood as a relational category between inwardness and outwardness. As John Jeffries Martin observes, '[w]hat seems to have been at stake in the Renaissance was rather the fundamental question of how the relation between these two realms should be understood or, when there was conflict between them, resolved'.[111] This relationship could be conceptualised in very different ways. This will become clear, for instance, in the contrast between the neo-Stoicist notion of a strict separation between inward and outward self, with little traffic between the two, on the one hand and anti-Nicodemite concerns with outward idolatry as a form of pollution that is liable to corrupt inward purity, even if one does not inwardly assent to it, on the other.

Of course, the representation of inwardness in the theatre is not without its problems. New Historicist and Cultural Materialist critics in the 1990s brought a poststructuralist sense of mediated, or even constructed, selfhood to the stage, where inwardness is indeed *nothing but* representation, and deconstructed the category of character as a textual chimera.[112] As Katharine

[109] See Lake, *Moderate Puritans*.

[110] The term 'heterodoxy' seems unsuitable because major religious controversies *within* the Church of England mostly concerned practical rather than dogmatic aspects of the Elizabethan settlement. In addition, the studied ambiguities and silences of official liturgical and credal documents such as the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion with regard to finer points of doctrine meant that the official standard of orthodoxy was sometimes in itself a matter of contention, as was the case, for instance, in the controversies on the doctrine of predestination from the 1590s onwards. See Hampton 223–6.

[111] Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* 16.

[112] See, for example, Belsey; Barker.

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Eisaman Maus notes in *Inwardness and Theater in the English Renaissance* (1995), 'inwardness as it becomes a concern in the theater is always perforce inwardness displayed: an inwardness, in other words, that has already ceased to exist'.[113] Theatrical representation therefore 'becomes subject to profound and fascinating crises of authenticity'.[114] However, this does not mean that inwardness has ceased to be a relevant category in drama. Lorna Hutson, for instance, has argued in *The Invention of Suspicion* (2007) and *Circumstantial Shakespeare* (2015) that early modern drama conveyed a sense of inwardness and character *hors du texte* through its appropriation of forensic rhetoric and rhetorical *topoi* of invention. As this book argues, the phenomenon of religious dissimulation may have contributed to both: an increasing sense of hidden inwardness as well as the crises of authenticity to which it was subject on the early modern stage.

[113] Eisaman Maus 32. [114] Ibid.

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CHAPTER 1

# *Religious Dissimulation and Toleration in Early Modern England*

Religious dissimulation played a central role in the English Reformation from its very beginnings and was, as this chapter argues, an essential aspect of religious toleration and persecution in early modern England. Owing to the unique historical course of the English Reformation, with the unpredictable whims of Henry VIII and the rapid succession of his children, each of whom pursued different religious policies, many believers in mid-sixteenth-century England must at some point have found themselves at odds with the religion imposed by the ruling monarch. Even the Elizabethan settlement, a term that would suggest continuity and stability in historical hindsight, became increasingly controversial as the sixteenth century drew to a close. It polarised Catholic as well as Protestant dissenters, who viewed the Elizabethan vision of Protestantism with scepticism, if not open hostility, and often acrimoniously disagreed among themselves about the extent to which one could legitimately conform with it. While leading Catholic as well as Protestant authorities generally condemned outward participation in idolatrous rites, such conformity was nonetheless practised widely and led to deep divisions among those who did not fully endorse the doctrines, liturgy, and ecclesiastical structure of the Established Church.

However, the architects of the Elizabethan settlement never conceived of the Established Church as a pure community of saints. They accepted spiritual hypocrisy as an inevitable aspect of their vision of an inclusive church under the governorship of the monarch, in which citizenship and church membership were supposed to be two sides of the same coin. That is to say, Elizabethan authorities generally attempted to contain and domesticate dissenting impulses within the framework of an overarching state church rather than to purify the church by identifying and expelling those who did not wholeheartedly subscribe to its tenets and practices. Hence, if there was something like religious toleration in Elizabethan England on an official level, it usually meant toleration for inward dissent



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rather than the free exercise of one's religious beliefs and practices, let alone a right for religious dissenters to organise themselves in separatist congregations. Yet even such inward dissent was frequently viewed with suspicion when religious dissent was perceived to provide a pretext for treason and resistance to the ruling monarch. This chapter provides an overview of the fluctuating fortunes of religious dissimulation in post-Reformation England as well as the religious and political concerns that made it such a controversial practice, and makes a case for its centrality in early modern debates on religious toleration and persecution.

## The Elizabethan Settlement

Religious dissimulation, or Nicodemism, as it came to be known in the sixteenth century, was already practised by the Lollards and during the persecutions of Henry VIII, but became a particularly pressing problem during the counter-Reformation under Queen Mary. Even though some 290 Protestants were burned at the stake and some 800 fled to the continent, the overwhelming majority conformed to the Marian regime.[1] For the Protestants who fled from England during the reign of Queen Mary, the mass defection of their compatriots from the Protestant faith became a veritable obsession that inspired some two-thirds of the original writings they published through continental presses.[2] In condemning their compatriots' infirmity, they could cite the anti-Nicodemite works of major Protestant theologians, such as Jean Calvin, Heinrich Bullinger, Pietro Martire Vermigli, Pierre Viret, or Wolfgang Musculus, whose writings were likewise translated into English.[3] Notably, these writings continued to be read and republished throughout the Elizabethan period. In the face of various threats such as foreign invasions and treason plots, there was no guarantee that English Protestants would not have their faith tested once more. Moreover, when John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, tightened the reins on the Puritan movement in the 1580s, the godly began to feel that persecution was not the exclusive privilege of the See of Rome.[4]

[1] For a census of the Marian refugees, see Hallowell Garrett; for the Marian Nicodemites, see Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism* 86–117; for Henrician Nicodemites, see Ryrie, *Gospel and Henry VIII* 69–89.
[2] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism* 88.
[3] For the English reception of Calvin's anti-Nicodemite writings, see Woo. For the reception of other continental anti-Nicodemite writings, see also Woo 69–87.
[4] For Elizabethan anti-Nicodemism and its debts to the anti-Nicodemite agitation of the Marian period, see Gunther, *Reformation Unbound* 97–130.

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And yet, the Marian Nicodemites also included pillars of the future Elizabethan state and church. Nicholas Bacon, William Cecil, and Queen Elizabeth herself had conformed during the Marian reign. Six of the eighteen bishops appointed in the first two years of Elizabeth's reign had neither suffered martyrdom nor gone into exile, including Matthew Parker, the future Archbishop of Canterbury. As Andrew Pettegree therefore puts it, '[t]o a very large extent the Elizabethan settlement was a Nicodemite Reformation'.[5] John Foxe's account of the heroic struggle of the English Protestant martyrs against the forces of darkness in his *Acts and Monuments* frequently distorts what was, for the vast majority, a much more complicated affair.[6]

As John Hales brazenly declared in an oration to Elizabeth in 1558, the Marian persecution had shown who were Christ's true disciples and '[w]ho were cameleons, that could turne themselues into all colours, with Protestantes, Protestantes: with Papists, Papists'.[7] However, there was no official *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past). Few were willing to imitate the intractable John Knox, who plainly told Queen Elizabeth 'how for fear of your life yow did decline from God and bowe to idolatrie'.[8] 'At heart,' Peter Marshall writes, 'Elizabeth was a Nicodemite queen, and willing to reign as a queen of Nicodemites'.[9] At least at the onset of Elizabeth's reign, an unwillingness to look too closely into the past also meant that the Marian clergy who were ready to compromise with the new regime were usually given a chance to do so. Although they were probably less compliant than earlier scholarship has assumed,[10] Francis Bacon concluded quite rightly in his account of the Elizabethan settlement, written some fifty years later, that 'both clergy and laity, far from troubling them with any severe inquisition, [Elizabeth] sheltered by a gracious connivency'.[11] Even among the most notorious Marian persecutors, only a few ever had to stand trial for their actions, which Foxe had painted in such vivid colours in his *Acts and Monuments*. Most of them

[5] Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism* 106.

[6] For the rewriting of the Marian persecution in Foxe and the retrospective self-fashioning in autobiographical accounts of the period, see Walsham, 'History, Memory' 911–15.

[7] Quoted in Foxe, *Acts and Monuments Online* 2117. References to *Acts and Monuments* are to the 1583 online edition, except for one instance in Chapter 7, where I refer to a document that is only reprinted in the appendices to the Townsend edition ("Appendices to the Life").

[8] Quoted in Gunther, *Reformation Unbound* 114.

[9] Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* 449.

[10] For a recent critique of Henry Gee's often cited conclusion in *The Elizabethan Clergy and the Settlement of Religion* (1898) that merely 200–300 Marian priests were deprived after the settlement, see Marshall and Morgan.

[11] Bacon, *Works* 6:313.

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were merely put under house arrest, set free on bail, or kept in prison – to the great chagrin of a sizeable number of Protestants who either had suffered under Queen Mary or were to suffer for their nonconformity under Elizabeth.[12]

However, not only the persecutors but also the Nicodemites of the Marian period continued to draw the ire of the hotter sort of Protestants. The godly did not cease to voice more or less subtle criticism of Elizabeth's and Cecil's failure to publicly repent their Nicodemism during Mary's reign even as late as in the 1580s. Also, Foxe shed an increasingly unflattering light on Elizabeth's conformity during the reign of Mary in the 1570 and 1576 editions of the *Acts and Monuments*, when the martyrologist came to share Puritan misgivings about the lack of further reform in the Elizabethan church.[13] The historical amnesia of the Elizabethan settlement therefore may well have played a previously underappreciated role in the formation of the Puritan movement, especially its complaints about the 'dregs of popery' and calls for stricter church discipline.[14] Tellingly, the Puritans' anti-Nicodemite stance is already inscribed in the name by which the godly came to be known. As Robert Harkins reminds us, the term 'Puritan' originally derived from the Novatians (who called themselves *cathari*, i.e. 'pure'), a Christian sect in late antiquity that opposed the readmission of the so-called *lapsi*, Nicodemites during the Decian persecution, into the fold of the Church.[15] The mass apostasy of English Protestants during the Marian persecution thus laid the foundations for the deep ideological divisions that were to plague the Church of England for decades to come.

Despite the government's unwillingness to take Nicodemites (both past and present) to task and to root out Marian Catholicism more thoroughly at the onset of Elizabeth's reign, the ideal of religious uniformity was never officially abandoned. The Act of Uniformity[16] prescribed regular church attendance every Sunday and other holiday 'upon payne of punishment by the Censures of the Churche, and also upon payne that every p[er]son so offending shall forfeite for every suche offence twelve pens'.[17] As Michael Questier points out, however, the law 'did not ... set out to penalise doctrinal dissent, only specific legal offences like recusancy',[18] even though there was consistent lobbying for the rooting out of erroneous opinions throughout the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods.[19] Especially towards the

[12] See Harkins, '"Persecutors"'.
[13] See Freeman, '"As True a Subiect Being Prysoner"'; Freeman, 'Providence and Prescription'.
[14] See Gunther, 'Marian Persecution'; Harkins, 'Elizabethan Puritanism'. [15] Ibid. 905–9.
[16] 1 Eliz. c. 2. [17] SR 4–1:357. [18] Questier, *Conversion* 168.
[19] Walsham, *Charitable Hatred* 57.

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close of Elizabeth's reign, fines and punishments became more drastic as the threat from both recusant and Puritan nonconformists was perceived to be on the rise. Still, outward conformity in the form of regular church attendance, rather than enforcement of doctrinal purity, remained the mainstay of statutory definitions of religious uniformity.[20]

To be clear, not all conformists were dissemblers to the same extent. Even though committed adherents to the liturgy of the Prayer Book may have been a minority, they did exist.[21] In turn, for dissenters to the left as to the right, conformity with the Established Church would probably have entailed different degrees of assent and dissimulation, depending on any individual's religious disposition and their perception of the church to which they conformed. Nicodemism might thus be viewed as a phenomenon on a gradual scale, which did not pose an equally urgent problem at all times and to all people who found fault with the Church of England. The extent to which dissenters did conform could differ as well. Catholics who complied with the statutory obligation of church attendance came to be known as 'church papists'. However, as Alexandra Walsham has shown, there were a number of choices and distinctions to be made that transcended a simple opposition between recusancy and church papistry.[22]

One frequent form of semi-conformity, for instance, was to attend the sermon but to abstain from the Lord's Supper. While there had been repeated attempts to make attendance at the Lord's Supper compulsory by statute in 1571, 1576, and 1581, all bills were vetoed by Elizabeth. In the severe anti-recusancy act of 1593, a clause to the same effect was dropped as well.[23] Elizabeth had no desire to smoke out dissenters, as is further attested by the failure of a proposed bill from 1586 ('An acte for the preservation of the Queenes Majesties moste roiall person'), which would have imposed severe punishments on Catholics, ranging from banishment to an indictment for treason, if under oath they refused to renounce the Catholic Church. As Questier notes, this bill 'differs from virtually all other anti-Catholic legislation (proposed or actual) in this period because it tried to compel a clear statement of inward assent to central Protestant tenets'.[24] That is to say, the legal measures designed to enforce religious unity focused primarily on political aspects of dissent and did not target doctrinal questions.

Initially, Elizabethan tolerance for Nicodemism was not least motivated by pragmatic concerns, such as the impossibility of building up a Protestant

[20] For the legal measures to suppress dissent in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, see Questier, *Conversion* 102–12. More generally, see also Diaper.
[21] On such conformists by conviction, see Maltby. [22] Walsham, *Church Papists*. [23] Ibid. 12.
[24] Questier, *Conversion* 115.

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state and church from scratch without relying on the expertise and resources of the previous regime,[25] or the fragile relationship with Spain, which recommended leniency towards Catholics.[26] As MacCulloch further suggests, Elizabeth's own conformity during her sister's reign may have led to a personal preference for leaving Nicodemites in peace. As late as in 1581, Elizabeth was possibly responsible for blocking severe legislation against the Family of Love, the most notorious Protestant Nicodemite sect in sixteenth-century England, after adherents of the sect had been discovered among the Queen's guard.[27] However, Elizabethan tolerance for Nicodemism was not simply a form of English exceptionalism but ideologically consonant with theological and political developments on the continent.

## Ecclesiological and Political Conceptions of Outward Conformity

Even though outward compliance with idolatrous rites was condemned by most major theologians in post-Reformation Europe, the heretic in one's own house was a somewhat different matter. Spiritual hypocrisy was accepted as an inevitable fact of life, especially when church and state were conceived as coterminous. As Richard Hooker puts it in his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* in his discussion of royal supremacy in book 8, 'there is not any man of the *Church of England*, but the same man is also a member of the *Commonwealth*, nor any man a member of the *Commonwealth* which is not also of the *Church of England*'.[28] Whereas Calvin's struggle for a relative autonomy of church discipline in Geneva during the 1540s and 1550s, most controversially on the issue of excommunication, bequeathed a potent legacy to English Presbyterianism, it was Zwinglian ecclesiology that provided the Church of England with the blueprint of a comprehensive state church under the governance of the secular magistrate.[29] As J. Wayne Baker puts it, '[f]or Zwingli, the church was equivalent to the Christian city and the Christian, to the citizen'; hence, the 'purpose of discipline was to check evil, crime, and disorder in the Christian community, not to create a pure church'.[30] This fissure between Calvinist and Zwinglian ecclesiology first broke out into open

[25] Gunther, 'Marian Persecution' 144–5. [26] MacCulloch, *Later Reformation* 36.
[27] MacCulloch, 'Latitude' 49–50. [28] Hooker 3:319.
[29] For the differences between Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli's successor in Zurich, on the relationship between church and state, see also Campi 97–105. For Bullinger's significant impact on English political theology as 'a prophet of the Royal Supremacy' (27), see Kirby 25–41. For the relations between Zurich and England in the formative years of the English Reformation more generally, see Euler; for the tensions between Geneva-inspired conceptions of the church and the Established Church in early modern England, see further Walsham, *Charitable Hatred* 55–6.
[30] Baker, 'Christian Discipline' 108.

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conflict in the late 1560s in Heidelberg, when Swiss physician Thomas Erastus took Zwinglian ideas to their radical conclusion, argued against independent church discipline as such, and rejected the disciplinary instrument of excommunication for lack of a Biblical foundation. As Erastus claimed, Jesus had not even excluded Judas from the Last Supper.[31]

Such disciplinary reticence was also favoured in the Church of England. A case in point are the disagreements between the established hierarchy and its Puritan critics on the exclusion from communion, which put a spotlight on the question whether the Church of England was to be conceived as a broad church or a pure church. In line with Zwinglian Eucharistic practice, Cranmer's revisions of the rite of the Eucharist had, unlike many Lutheran church orders, dispensed entirely with the medieval requirement of auricular confession before receiving the sacrament.[32] The Puritan *Admonition to the Parliament* (1572), however, criticised this absence of 'an examination of the communicants', as it was indeed practised in Lutheran churches, and expressed concern about the unworthy reception of the sacrament. The *Admonition* therefore demanded that 'Excommunication be restored to his olde former force' and '[t]hat papists nor other, neither constrainedly nor customably, communicate in the misteries of salvation'.[33] However, John Whitgift, the later Archbishop of Canterbury, rejected a pre-communion examination. Instead, he insisted that 'it is necessary for every man to examine himself, and not so necessary for one man to examine another'.[34] This refusal 'boldly to enter into many men's consciences'[35] remained a key note in the conformist rejection of Puritan calls for stricter discipline and was also voiced, some twenty years later, in Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.

In book 3, chapter 1, of his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Policy*, Hooker admits that 'the absence of inward beleefe of hart' excludes from salvation, but '[i]f by externall profession they be Christians, then are they of the visible Church of Christ . . . yea, although they be impious idolators' or 'wicked heretiques'.[36] The same conviction underpins Hooker's discussion of the

[31] See Erastus, thesis 28. On Erastus, see further Gunnoe.

[32] On the Lutheran maintenance of a non-sacramental spiritual examination of the communicant, see Nelson Burnett 22–3. For the liturgy of the Eucharist in the Church of England, see Turrell.

[33] *Puritan Manifestoes* 14–15.

[34] Whitgift, *Works* 3:80. In practice, some godly ministers actually did examine their parishioners before communion, and exclusion from the sacrament was practised in Elizabethan England on the grounds of notorious sin (such as adultery), ignorance of the basics of the Christian faith (e.g. the Prayer Book catechism, the Apostolic Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments), and malice towards neighbours. However, exclusion met with increasing opposition by the early seventeenth century. See Haigh.

[35] Whitgift, *Works* 3:101. [36] Hooker 1:198.

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admission to the Lord's Supper in book 8, chapter 3. Arguing against Puritan demands that suspected crypto-Catholics 'ought not to be admitted much lesse compelled to the supper',[37] Hooker again insists that '[m]anie things exclude from the kingdom of God although from the Church they separate not'.[38] Even 'heresie and *manie other crimes* which *whollie sever from God* do sever from the Church of God in *part onlie*'.[39] Hence, there is room in the Church for hypocrites, who 'in deed are not his yeat must be reputed his by us that knowe not theire inward thoughtes'.[40] That is to say, although 'in the eye of God they are against Christ that are not trulie and sincerelie with him, in our eyes they must be received as with Christ that are not to outward showe against him'.[41] However, Hooker's claim that God does not 'binde us to dive into mens consciences'[42] is not simply an expression of moral generosity but paradoxically buttresses a case for extensive control, at least externally, of the religious life of all church members. Rejecting Puritan accusations of laxity, Hooker notes: 'where as they seeke to make it more hard for dissemblers to be received into the Church then law and politie as yeat hath done, they make it in truth more easie for such kind of persons to winde them selves out of law and to continewe the same they were'.[43] Hooker's view betrays a mindset no less intolerant of real diversity than Puritan claims to moral and doctrinal purity. However, instead of (more or less violent) gestures of exclusion, Hooker advocates for coercive mechanisms of containment, as when he claims that 'it is and must be the Churches care that all maie in outward conformitie be one'.[44] In contrast, the Puritan desire for a pure church might even imply toleration, as Whitgift had already noted sardonically in the Admonition Controversy:

> Surely the papists have to thank you [i.e. the Puritans], that you would not have them constrained to come to the communion: this one lesson of liberty hath made all the stubborn and stiff-necked papists in England great patrons and fautors of your book [i.e. *Admonition to the Parliament*]: you might as well have said that you would have every man freely profess what religion he list without controlment, and so set all at liberty, which is your seeking.[45]

This was certainly not what the Puritans were aiming for, but Hooker's and Whitgift's comments make clear that inclusivity is not to be mistaken for toleration. Hence, the acceptance of dissimulation, insofar as it was a mandatory aspect of state church membership, can be considered as a step towards greater toleration only in a very limited sense at best.

[37] Ibid. 2:353. [38] Ibid. 2:350. [39] Ibid. 2:351. [40] Ibid. [41] Ibid. 2:354. [42] Ibid. [43] Ibid. 2:353. [44] Ibid. 2:352. [45] Whitgift, *Works* 3:133.

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In addition to this ecclesiological acceptance, or imperative, of dissimulation, the sixteenth century also saw the emergence of more secular approaches to religious dissent and Nicodemism, especially in the context of the French Wars of Religion, which were followed closely by English observers.[46] From the early 1560s onwards, so-called *politiques*, lawyers and politicians such as Etienne Pasquier, Michel de l'Hôpital, and Catherine de Medici, argued that in the face of civil war, the political necessity of toleration trumped, at least for the time being, the theological imperative of religious unity.[47] According to Quentin Skinner, this reorientation was one of the central factors in the genesis of the modern state, since 'if there were to be any prospect of achieving civic peace, the powers of the State would have to be divorced from the duty to uphold any particular faith'.[48] However, such qualifications of the imperative of confessional uniformity by no means led to secularised states in any recognisably modern sense. As the religious wars of the sixteenth century made clear to the *politiques*, a cavalier attitude towards religious difference was grossly negligent.

Many *politique* theorists remained, at least in principle, committed to the idea that religious unity was indispensable for the maintenance of the state. In his *Six livres de la République* (1576), Jean Bodin argues that 'there is nothing which doth more vphold and maintaine the estates and Commonweals than religion: and that it is the principall foundation of the power and strength of monarchies and Seignories'.[49] Therefore, Bodin stresses that for the sake of political stability, religion should never be called in question once it is settled.[50] Unity of religion is of paramount importance since 'the preseruation of the subiects love amongst themselues . . . is especially nourished & maintained by their consent and agreement in matters of religion'.[51] In line with French *politique* thought on toleration, Flemish humanist Justus Lipsius likewise rejected religious pluralism in one of the most influential works of political thought in the late sixteenth century, his *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* (1589): 'One religion is

[46] For the impact of the French Wars of Religion on English political thought, especially in the seventeenth century, see Salmon, *French Religious Wars*.

[47] For the *politique* case for toleration, see Forst 138–46; Skinner 2:249–54; Lecler 2:36–135. In this book, I use the term *politique* as a shorthand for approaches to religious toleration, also beyond the French context, which are based primarily on pragmatic and political considerations rather than theological or philosophical rationalisations of confessional pluralism. Admittedly, this is a somewhat unhistorical and artificial use of the term. *Politique* was not a term of self-identification, and neither was there, as assumed in older scholarship, a clearly defined party of *politiques* from the 1560s up to the 1590s. For these important caveats, see Bettinson; Turchetti. For the historiographical afterlife of the *politiques*, see especially Beame.

[48] Skinner, 2:352. [49] Bodin, *Of the lawes and cvstomes [République]* 536. [50] Ibid. 534–6.

[51] Ibid. 539.

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the author of vnitie; and from a confused religion there alwayes groweth dissention'.[52] However, if religious diversity was already a fait accompli, Lipsius opted, like the French *politiques*, for compromise rather than intransigence:

> Others cry out, weapons and warre: But do not we see again, that weapons and warre haue bred resistance by force of armes? The minde of man is rebellious by nature, enclining to that which is forbidden, and of hard attempt. Well, it behoueth thee more then once to consider, if it be not better to temporise, then by vntimely remedies to set mischiefes abroade.[53]

The pessimistic assessment of the state's capacity to rule the minds of its subjects and the futility, even counter-productivity, of trying to do so were lessons learned at great cost during the French and Dutch civil wars. However, *politique* toleration was only provisional non-interference and is not to be mistaken for religious liberty, as the instability of toleration in France, exemplified most significantly by the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, proved. *Politique* toleration was only ever a second-best solution, granted grudgingly and for pragmatic reasons.

Still, this pragmatic rejection of coercion in matters of religion could build on a venerable conception of faith not only as an object of intellectual comprehension but also as an object of voluntary assent. As Aquinas famously puts it in the *Summa theologiae*, faith is 'an act of mind assenting to the divine truth by virtue of the command of the will as this is moved by God through grace'.[54] Since volition is indispensable in this conception of faith, as the *politiques* frequently pointed out, any enforcement of orthodoxy had to fail because of the alleged impossibility of constraining the human will, which can only be drawn to faith by the Father himself (John 6:44).[55] If one wished to enforce religious uniformity nonetheless, Nicodemism had to be accepted as an inevitable consequence. Unwilling

[52] Lipsius, *Sixe bookes [Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex]*62. For Lipsius' consonance with the French *politiques* on matters of toleration, see Oestreich 46 and Forst 160–1; for the likely influence of Bodin's *République* on Lipsius' *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex*, see also Oestreich 75.

[53] Lipsius, *Sixe bookes [Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex]* 65.

[54] Aquinas 2.2.2.9. For the Augustinian roots of this stress on volition, see Charles Taylor 127–42.

[55] The principle was widely shared and thoroughly anchored in patristic sources. See, in particular, Lactantius, *Institutiones divinae* in *L. Caeli Firmiani Lactanti opera omnia* 5.19.11; Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium tractatus CXXIV* 26.2. Aquinas, for instance, cites Augustine in his argument that infidels should not be compelled to adopt the Christian faith (2.2.10.8). Such precedents were cited in *politique* arguments for toleration, for example in Bodin, *Colloquium* 471; Bodin, *Of the lawes and cvstomes [République]* 539; Lipsius, *Sixe bookes [Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex]* 65–6. In *Contra litteras Petiliani* 2.83 (PL 43:315), however, Augustine argues that, although nobody can be compelled to believe, heretics may at least be restrained from propagating their erroneous views

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to abandon the ideal of religious uniformity entirely, the *politiques* therefore consciously factored Nicodemism into their religious policies.

Such a judicious and economical exercise of power was the mainstay of *politique* approaches to religious toleration and theorised in careful delimitations of the public and the private sphere in the period's nascent theories of absolutism.[56] This nexus of sovereignty and Nicodemism is expressed with instructive clarity in Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan*. Hobbes agrees with the *politiques* that 'belief, and unbelief never follow men's command'.[57] However, outward declaration of belief is a different matter: '[p]rofession with the tongue is but an external thing, and no more than any other gesture whereby we signify our obedience'.[58] In Hobbes' state, one is obligated to acknowledge the state's claim to outward obedience, even in matters of religion. In turn, however, one is inwardly free to believe whatever one wishes to believe.[59]

Hobbes was not breaking new ground but building on the *politique* insight that toleration for private dissent could be employed as a deliberate instrument of power. As Lisa Ferraro Parmelee has observed accordingly, the English reception of *politique* thought in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries 'helped establish an intellectual climate in England conducive to the later development of Stuart absolutism'.[60] A case in point is the Italian emigré Alberico Gentili, Regius Professor of civil law at Oxford, who advanced a typically *politique* case for religious toleration in his *De iure belli* (1598), citing authorities such as Michel de l'Hôspital and Jean Bodin.[61] Tellingly, Gentili was also one of the first writers in England to give an unambiguously absolutist account of royal power in his *Regales disputationes tres* (1605).[62] While anti-Nicodemism was a potentially

and corrupting others, a principle that was eventually enshrined in canon law as well. See Gratian 23.5.33 (CIC 1:939).

[56] See, for example, Holmes, 'Jean Bodin'; Lessay. [57] Hobbes 42.11. [58] Ibid.

[59] See further *Leviathan* 46.37 for Hobbes' critique of making windows into men's hearts as a violation of natural law. Notably, Hobbes also makes a distinction between 'divine worship', directed towards God, and 'civil worship', a form of obedience to the secular magistrate (45.13), in order to rationalise Nicodemism, which is anticipated in Bodin's tendency to derive a political duty of Nicodemism from the distinction between private religion and public worship. Compare with Bodin, *Method* 33–4; Bodin, *Of the lawes and cvstomes [République]* 539–40. For a fuller discussion of Hobbes' distinction between inward liberty and outward obedience, even to the point of an imperative to publicly act against one's private conscience in obedience to the magistrate, see Lloyd.

[60] Ferraro Parmelee 2. [61] Gentili 1.9–11.

[62] For Gentili's pioneering role in English political thought on sovereignty, see Krautheim 97–100; Burgess, *Absolute Monarchy* 75–8; Lee 278–80. Significantly, Gentili was also the period's most learned defender of the theatre in England. A partial edition and translation of his Latin contributions to the debate on the legitimacy of the theatre with John Reynolds, which led to the publication of the latter's much-better-known *Overthrow of Stage-Playes* (1599), can be found in Binns.

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rebellious stance that could serve to justify resistance to a heretical ruler, the distinction between inward faith and public religion, with its concomitant conception of Nicodemism as a political duty, pre-empted religious justifications for political resistance.[63] In turn, by disentangling the strict enforcement of orthodoxy from the duties of the magistrate, *politique* writers such as Bodin attempted to neutralise religious dissent, which could no longer be contained by means of violence and coercion, as a source of religious conflict and resistance to the state's claim to sovereignty.

As in Hooker's ecclesiology, tolerance for dissimulation can therefore be understood as a carefully calibrated exercise of power rather than a renunciation of authority. The increasing acceptance of Nicodemism and the growing conception of religion as a private affair is thus inextricably bound up with the rise of absolutist ideologies and not with any sort of liberalism *avant la lettre*. Questions of sovereignty and resistance are therefore also central to the treatment of religious dissimulation on the early modern stage. Whereas John Michael Archer has postulated a 'mutually productive relationship between sovereignty and intelligence' in his *Sovereignty and Intelligence: Spying and Court Culture in the English Renaissance* (1993),[64] I argue the contrary in this book, namely, that the desire to sound one's subjects' inward selves was rather a symptom of political crisis and disintegrating legitimacy than a manifestation of sovereign power.

*Politique* theorists like Bodin were eagerly read in England, as is attested in Gabriel Harvey's *Letter-Book* in c. 1579: 'You can not stepp into a schollars studye but (ten to on) you shall likely [?] finde open ether Bodin de Republica or Le Royes Exposition uppon Aristotle Politiques or sum other like Frenche or Italian Politique Discourses'.[65] Similarly, Lipsius' *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* from 1589 was published in London already one year later and appeared in English in 1594. Although Bodin's *Six livres de la république* (1576) had to wait until 1606 for an English edition, the French political theorist published a Latin translation of his *opus magnum* in 1586, not least in order to meet significant demand on the English market.[66] In addition, Bodin had personal ties to England, which he visited in the early

[63] For the connections between Calvin's anti-Nicodemism and Huguenot resistance in France, see Eire, 'Prelude to Sedition?' 141–4.
[64] Archer 3.
[65] Harvey 79. For the influx of French politique thought in England especially during the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign, see also Ferraro Parmelee.
[66] Krautheim 46.

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1580s in the entourage of the Duke of Alençon, and entertained personal connections with Walsingham as well as the Queen, with whom he pleaded for greater toleration for English Catholics.[67]

Among English writers, Francis Bacon in particular channelled *politique* conceptions of toleration into English political thought with remarkable consistency over his long career.[68] In his essay 'Of Unity of Religion', for instance, Bacon laments the evils of 'Quarrels, and Divisions about *Religion*' and recommends that only one religion, 'being the chiefe Band of humane Society',[69] should be officially recognised. However, he also warns against taking up 'Mahomets Sword . . . That is, to propagate *Religion*, by Warrs, or by Sanguinary Persecutions, to force Consciences; except it be in cases of Overt Scan-|dall, Blasphemy, or Intermixture of Practize, against the State'.[70] Like Bodin and Lipisius, Bacon resolves the contradiction between these two principles by advocating for the toleration of private dissent. Thus, it was Bacon who famously reported Elizabeth's often cited lack of interest in the spiritual inner lives of her subjects: 'her maiestie not likinge to make windowes into mens hartes & secret thoughtes excepte the abundance of them did overflowe into overte and expresse actes and affirmacions, tempred her law so as it restraineth onlie manifest disobedience'.[71] It is according to *politique* principles that Bacon characterised Elizabeth as a moderate ruler who abstained from any sort of confessional fanaticism and adopted repressive measures against Catholics not *because of* but *despite* her views on liberty of conscience. In his retrospective *In felicem memoriae Elizabethae* (1608), for instance, Bacon writes:

> [H]er intention undoubtedly was, on the one hand not to force consciences, but on the other not to let the state, under pretence of conscience and religion, be brought in danger. Upon this ground she concluded at the first

[67] After the execution of the Jesuit Edmund Campion in 1581, Bodin exhorted the Queen and the *optimates* and *senatores* of England to consider that with 'the minds of men, the more they are forced, the more forward and stubborn they are, and the greater [the] punishment that shall be inflicted upon them the less good is to be done, the nature of man being commonly such as may of it selfe bee led to like of anything, but never enforced so to do' (quoted in *Colloquium* xxiii–iv). For Bodin's stay in England, see Baldwin 165–72; Salmon, *French Religious Wars* 181–3. For the English reception of Bodin and his *Six livres de la république* (1776), see Krautheim 44–69.

[68] Bacon's awareness of continental political thought, and not least that of the *politiques*, is well attested. For instance, Bacon recommended Lipsius' *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* to Fulke Greville as the best available epitome of political theory shortly after its appearance (OFB 1:207) and sought the acquaintance of prominent *literati* and men of state such as Jacques Auguste de Thou, a *politique* historian of the French Wars of Religion and one of the architects of the Edict of Nantes (Spedding 4:109).

[69] OFB 15:11. [70] OFB 15:14.

[71] OFB 1:379–80. For Bacon's familiarity with Biblical *loci* on dissimulation, which were often cited in debates on Nicodemism, see also his critique of Puritan nonconformity in OFB 1:191.

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> that, in a people courageous and warlike and prompt to pass from strife of minds to strife of hands, the free allowance and toleration by public authority of two religions would be certain destruction.[72]

As with *politique* theorists such as Bodin or Lipsius, theological concerns with the purity of faith or the salvation of souls are remarkably absent from Bacon's reasoning. The imperative of confessional uniformity is not a divine sanction but follows merely from political prudence. The 'Whig narrative' of religious toleration, exemplified most prominently in modern scholarship by W. K. Jordan's *The Development of Religious Toleration in England* (1932–40), recognised in this turn to a secular and pragmatic approach to policing religious dissent 'a complete reversal of the medieval theory of the persecution of misbelief and nonconformity' that 'attains in one bound half the distance to religious toleration'.[73] Political stability and not purity of faith, Jordan concludes, was the primary concern in Elizabethan religious politics.

## Religious Dissent and Treason

Even though the spokesmen of Elizabeth's ecclesiastical programme explicitly disavowed any ambition to root out private dissent, it needs to be stressed that the moderate assessment of Elizabeth's religious policies by the likes of Bacon was the product of highly polemical contexts, in which the Elizabethan government defended itself against the charge of religious persecution. Elizabeth's alleged refusal to make windows into men's hearts, for instance, is documented in Bacon's *Certaine Obseruations Vppon a Libell* (1593), which was not a detached and disinterested analysis of Elizabeth's religious policies but a polemical response to the Catholic Richard Verstegan's *Declaration of the true causes of the great troubles, presupposed to be intended against the realme of England* (1592). Bacon's reply to Verstegan thus primarily served the purpose of clearing Elizabeth's 'evil counsillors' from the charge of fanning religious conflict and persecution for their private gain. The charge of persecution could not be taken lightly in a Church that claimed to have been watered with the blood of the Marian martyrs.[74] Hence, there was every interest to downplay the

[72] Bacon, *Works* 11:454. For the same assessment, already made in 1593, see OFB 1:379.
[73] Jordan 1:233.
[74] On this point, see Walsham, *Charitable Hatred* 52–3, who additionally points out that the secularisation of the crime of heresy, as evident in its ideological and juridical conflation with treason, reflected general European trends and was, contrary to the Whig narrative, not a form of English exceptionalism.

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confessional aspect of anti-Catholic legislation and to distance Elizabeth from 'the tyranie of *th*e Church of *Rome* w*hi*ch had vsed by terro*u*r and rigo*u*r to seeke comaundement of mens faithes and consciences'.[75] Claims to toleration were thus not least part of a rhetorical strategy that served to refute Catholic denunciations of Elizabeth's allegedly persecutory state. Whether such protestations accurately represented the actual state of affairs is a different question altogether.

More recent scholarship has indeed been critical about the progress of toleration in early modern England.[76] An Augustinian theology of persecution, concerned with saving souls from damnation by any means necessary or at least preventing heretics from infecting others with their errors, remained pervasive in early modern England even when it did not officially inform government policy.[77] In addition, John Coffey has described early modern England as a 'persecutory state' that enforced conformity with a degree of aggression that was unparalleled in other Protestant states.[78] To be clear, heresy executions were rare during the Elizabethan period.[79] While around 290 heretics were burned during the brief reign of Queen Mary, only 6 heresy executions took place during the reign of her sister Elizabeth and only 2 under her successor James Stuart, all of whom were associated either with Anabaptism or anti-Trinitarianism. However, the Elizabethan period also saw the execution of around 189 Catholics.

Arguably the major source of disagreement on the controversial status of toleration in Elizabethan England, in modern scholarship as well as in early modern polemics, lies in the legal measures under which English Catholics suffered and the question of whether they should be interpreted as a form of religious persecution. Lake and Questier note that in the execution of Catholics 'the point was not the visceral projection of the power of the state in and through the maximized public agony of the victim so much as the visual message that the felon had died a *traitor's* death rather than a heretic's death'.[80] Apologists of the Elizabethan state proclaimed that the government wished only to penalise political disobedience and that it tortured and executed Catholics as traitors rather than as heretics. Bacon

[75] OFB 1:379.
[76] See in particular Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*; Coffey. For a helpful literature review, see also Walsham, 'Cultures of Coexistence'.
[77] See Walsham, *Charitable Hatred* 39–49. For the early modern reception of Augustine's 'tough love' more generally, see also Kaplan 15–47.
[78] Coffey 102–4. [79] The following numbers are taken from Coffey 90, 99.
[80] Lake and Questier, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat* 238–9.

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claims in his panegyrical biography of Elizabeth that serious anti-Catholic legislation was passed only once 'the ambitious and vast design of Spain for the subjugation of the kingdom came gradually to light'.[81] Even then, Elizabeth 'blunted the law's edge that but a small proportion of the priests were capitally punished'.[82]

In turn, Catholic polemicists such as Richard Verstegan denounced 'the great and absurd impudence' to make 'that to be new *Treason*, which is nothing els but old faith and religion'.[83] Whether either party acted in good faith is doubtful. Not without justification, the French Jesuit historian Jean Lecler has pointed out that the draconian punishments for celebrating Mass and the outlawing of paraphernalia of Catholic worship such as rosaries and prayer books strained the government's alleged distinction between treason and religious dissent.[84] On the other hand, Catholic discourses of loyalty were frequently belied by a considerable potential for political subversion among England's Catholic communities. Especially from the mid-1580s onwards, the Jesuit missionaries' initial disavowal of a political agenda was severely compromised with the prospect of a foreign Catholic invasion that might drive the Protestant heresy from England's shores for good.[85]

While it was a common polemical manoeuvre to brand religious dissent as an ideological pretext for political disobedience, the political ramifications of religious dissent did indeed pose a real dilemma in early modern England. Since the supreme head of the church (or governor, as Elizabeth preferred) and the monarch were identical, defying the state church was at least in theory inherently seditious. Importantly, such defiance was not always limited to the church itself, as became painfully clear with the publication of the papal bull *Regnans in excelsis* (1570), which absolved all English Catholics from their allegiance to their Queen. In turn, anybody who declared that 'Queene Elizabeth is an Heretyke'[86] became a traitor under the treason statute from 1571.[87] Despite government claims to

[81] Bacon, *Works* 313–14. [82] Ibid. 316.

[83] Verstegan 45. Compare with Pedro de Ribadeneyra's *Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England* (1588), bk. 3, ch. 25 ('How False It Is That None Die in England for the Sake of Religion, as the Edict Claims') and ch. 26 ('The Edict's Proofs That None Die in England for Reasons of Religion').

[84] Lecler 2:306–13.

[85] See Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise* 129–65. In addition, contrary to the conclusions of early scholarship on Elizabethan Catholicism, a sizeable segment of English Catholics, even among the laity, seems to have supported or at least felt ambivalent about a foreign invasion. See McGrath.

[86] SR 4–1:526.

[87] For a recent reassessment of the importance of *Regnans in excelsis* in Elizabethan political thought, see Muller.

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discriminate scrupulously between treason and religious dissent, none of the many Elizabethan revisions of English treason legislation actually managed to establish a workable distinction between treason and religious dissent. On the contrary, John Bellamy notes that after *Regnans in excelsis*, 'treason indictments showed a new close association in the minds of the crown's lawyers between treason and papal sympathies',[88] which concurred with a wider 'emotional and imaginative elision between Catholicism and treacherous support for foreign powers'.[89] Similarly, Coffey observes that '[n]o other Protestant state was quite so crude in lumping together profession of Catholic faith and high treason'.[90] Thus, the Act against Jesuits and Seminarists from 1585[91] expelled from England all Jesuits and priests ordained after 1 June 1559 under pain of treason.

In practice, the fear that the missionary priests were preparing the ground for a foreign Catholic invasion often meant, at least in the eyes of the government, that there could be no tolerance for secrecy. The propagation of outward conformity thus often coexisted with urgent calls to sound the depths of treasonous hearts, as for instance in William Cecil's *Execution of Iustice in England* (1583). Even though Cecil disavows that the Queen's 'quiet' Catholic subjects were ever persecuted,[92] he continuously harps on the theme of treacherous priests' 'inward practices', 'secret Maskes',[93] and 'secret lurkings',[94] and warns against their 'secret labours ... secretly to winne all people, with whom they dare deale',[95] which need to be discovered and exposed for the sake of national security.

Such intolerance for secrecy had a legal basis in the Tudor conception of treason as a thought crime that has its locus in the traitor's intention rather than in the act itself. According to the treason statute from 1352,[96] the scope of treason covered not only overt actions but also cases '[w]hen a Man doth compass or imagine the Death of our Lord the King',[97] as did the Elizabethan treason statute from 1571, which likewise incriminated anyone who would 'compasse imagyn invent devyse or intend' to harm the Queen.[98] The Edwardian definition was cited, for instance, by the Solicitor General Thomas Egerton in the treason trials following the Catholic Babington Plot in 1586 in order to demonstrate that there was no need for two witnesses of an overt act of treason on the part of the co-conspirator Edward Abington:

> the statute of 25 Edw. 3 is, Who shall imagine: how then can that be proved by honest men, being a secret cogitation which lieth in the minds of traitors?

[88] Bellamy 67. [89] Walsham, *Charitable Hatred* 52. [90] Coffey 103. [91] 27 Eliz. c. 2.
[92] Cecil B1v–B2r. [93] Ibid. Aiiiv. [94] Ibid. Aivr. [95] Ibid. Aivv. [96] 25 Edw. III Stat. 5 c. 2.
[97] SR 1:319–20. [98] SR 4–1:526.

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> And such traitors will never reveal their cogitations unto honest men, but unto such as themselves . . . so then they would have their treasons never revealed.[99]

Such a 'secret cogitation' may be difficult to prove without confession, but it could be penalised as constructive treason, which was inferred from indirect evidence of the perpetrators' alleged intentions, as was the case after the Essex rebellion in 1601,[100] or extracted via torture.[101] It goes without saying that this criminalisation of inward intentions was bound to undermine the policy of outward conformity when religious dissent was conflated with treason. The Catholic polemicist William Allen accordingly protested in 1584 that 'they wil sound al the Catholiques hartes in the Realme; & (which is more then Antichristian violence) they wil punish them as traitors by death most cruel, for their onelie thoughtes'.[102] The Elizabethan policy of outward conformity was thus everything else but stable but could be suspended in times of crisis, when the regime resorted to espionage, torture, or the imposition of oaths in order to force religious dissenters and especially their spiritual leaders to reveal their allegedly treacherous designs.

Even in good faith, the distinction between a public sphere of political obedience and a private sphere as an acceptable locus of religious dissent is problematic in its own right and raises serious questions, then as now, as to whether it can serve as a valid conceptual premise for religious toleration. Where exactly the line between public and private spheres is to be drawn is by no means self-evident, as borderline cases such as nonconformist conventicles or celebrations of Mass in private households suggest, and always subject to social and political negotiation. As Benjamin Kaplan has pointed out, 'the early modern distinction between public and private was as much cultural fiction as it was social reality'.[103] In addition, wherever the line is eventually drawn, it might not be equally acceptable to all faiths on which it is imposed. The aggressive secularism of the contemporary French model of *laicité*, for instance, might pose relatively minor challenges to the country's Christian majorities and their religious practices. However, it raises major obstacles for religious minorities trying to observe religious injunctions while simultaneously participating in public life, as the

[99] *Complete Collection of State Trials* 1:1148. [100] Bellamy 80.
[101] On constructive treason, see also Lemon 5–7; Cunningham 7–9. For the Elizabethan preference to indict Catholics by the Edwardian statute because it did not require witnesses, see further Bellamy 75–8.
[102] Allen, *Modest defence* 70. [103] Kaplan 176.

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debates on accommodating dietary restrictions in public institutions, displaying religious symbols in public, and wearing headscarves and the like attest.[104]

A frequent attempt to reconcile such prohibitions with religious liberty, from the early modern period to the present, consists in declaring banned manifestations of religious identity as non-essential to the practice of the faith in question. However, it is evidently difficult to avoid paradox when self-professedly secular governments or courts arrogate the authority to decide what practices fall under the scope of any given religion and therefore deserve to be protected under the principle of religious liberty, and what practices are merely social accessories, non-essential to the actual exercise of one's faith. Similarly, Francis Bacon is able to deny that Catholics are persecuted only by declaring that banned Catholic paraphernalia, such as '*the Agnus Dei*' and 'hallowed beades', are 'well knowne not to be any essentiall parte of the Romane Religion, but onelie to be vsed in practize as loue tokens, to inchaunte and bewiche the peoples affections from their allegiaunce to their naturall Soueraigne'.[105] Bacon's implication that it falls to the Protestant state to define the 'essentiall parte of the Romane Religion' and dismiss other aspects of it as mere tools of political subversion is evidently no less problematic than the prerogative of the secular state to determine which religious practices are to be recognised as such and, hence, fall under the scope of religious liberty.

Finally, even if the English government had been perfectly tolerant of Nicodemism, not everyone agreed with Bodin that religion, 'the direct turning of a cleansed mind toward God, can exist without civil training, without association, in the solitude of one man', who is thought 'to be happier the farther he is removed from civil society'.[106] As Calvin writes in a sermon on the need for the *ecclesia visibilis*,

> this is a miserable and cursed bondage, that they cannot be suffered too call vppon the name of God and too confesse Iesus Christe. The holy Ghoste when hee would peerce the heartes of the faithfull who were captiue in Babylon, putteth this sentence into their mouth, How shal wee sing the prayses of the Lorde in a straunge lande?[107]

[104] For a post-colonial critique of Locke's conception of toleration from this perspective, see de Roover and Balagangadhara. For the difficulty of drawing a just boundary between the private and the public spheres, see also Nussbaum 68–90; Galeotti 53–84.
[105] OFB 1:380–1. [106] Bodin, *Method* 33–4. [107] Calvin, *Foure sermons* E3r.

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For Calvin, the likes of Bodin were 'corner creeping and caskate Philosophers', who 'haue not so much as a droppe of Christianitie in them'.[108] On the Catholic side, Allen likewise rejected the notion that the Catholic faith could be reduced to questions 'touching our inward beleefe'.[109] Southwell similarly argued that the laws which served 'to force men to shewe and professe a conformablenesse in external behauiour' did not grant any meaningful toleration for the Catholic faith; instead, 'theyre lawes, and all theyre indeuoures tend to make vs denye oure, and receyue theyre beliefe' – which was indeed the long game that some Elizabethan dignitaries were playing.[110] Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York, for instance, admitted in a collection of sermons published in 1585 that coercion alone will not immediately produce the desired change of heart, but may play a significant part in eventually bringing dissenters to the true faith: 'For though religion cannot be driven into men by force, yet men by force may be driven to those ordinary means whereby they are wont to be brought to the knowledge of the truth. Parents cannot constrain their children to be learned; but parents may constrain them to repair thither where they may be taught'.[111] Whether early modern England was a tolerant or a persecutory state therefore depended not least on one's conception of religion and its place in political and social life – questions that were nowhere discussed with greater urgency than in the period's debates on Nicodemism.

To conclude, dissimulation was a highly contested but central category in early modern thought on religious toleration and persecution. The anti-Nicodemite imperative formulated by major Protestant theologians in the first decades of the Reformation remained well alive throughout the sixteenth century. However, it stood in considerable tension with the Zwinglian ecclesiology adopted by the Church of England and developments in political theory from the second half of the century onwards, which had largely accepted the inevitability of Nicodemism. The Marian exiles, especially Foxe, had cultivated a nonconformist ethos during the Marian persecution that would eventually sit rather uneasily with Elizabeth's 'Nicodemite Reformation', as is attested by the tensions between the Established Church and Puritan nonconformists. Moreover, the Elizabethan regime itself frequently abandoned its policy of outward conformity when it perceived a political threat in religious dissent, which could not be allowed to

[108] Ibid. D4v. [109] Allen, *Modest defence* 10. [110] Southwell, *Epistle of comfort* 168–9.
[111] Sandys 192.

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fester under the cover of fair appearances. Hence, the rationale of refusing to make windows into the hearts of dissenters came under increasing scrutiny and frequently gave way to aggressive measures to access the inward thoughts and beliefs of religious dissenters. As the following chapters will show, these different perspectives on religious dissimulation and the fluctuations of policy which I have outlined so far also played an important role in the various and often changing ways in which contemporaries understood theatricality and its religious and political implications.

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CHAPTER 2

# *From Oldcastle to Falstaff*
## *The Politics of Martyrdom and Conformity in* 1 *and* 2 Henry IV

There is a critical consensus that Shakespeare's Falstaff is linked to the fifteenth-century Lord Cobham, the Lollard Sir John Oldcastle, who was remembered as a proto-Protestant martyr in John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.[1] Evidence suggests that Shakespeare's Falstaff was once called Oldcastle in performance. In *1 Henry IV* Hal addresses him as 'my old lad of the castle' (1.2.40), there is an unmetrical line that could easily be mended by replacing the name 'Falstaff' with 'Oldcastle' (1H4 2.2.105), and the 1600 quarto of *2 Henry IV* contains the speech prefix 'Old.'.[2] Whether intentionally or not, it seems that Shakespeare had offended the sixteenth-century inheritors of Oldcastle's title, William Brooke and his son Henry, and therefore had to change the name.[3]

Earlier critics read Shakespeare's portrayal of Oldcastle/Falstaff as a Catholic satire of a revered Protestant martyr.[4] However, David Scott Kastan has noted that, in the last decades of the sixteenth century, the Lollards became increasingly associated with Puritanism and its supposedly

[1] I cite the *Henry IV* plays from the following editions: *King Henry IV Part 1*, ed. David Scott Kastan, The Arden Shakespeare, London: Bloomsbury, 2002; *King Henry IV Part 2*, ed. René Weis, The Oxford Shakespeare, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.

[2] Shakespeare, *Second part of Henrie the fourth* B2v. Alternative explanations for these textual traces of 'Oldcastle' have been offered by Kastan, who notes that the unmetrical line is part of a passage printed as prose up to the eighteenth century and thus perhaps not evidence of revision. He also suggests that the speech prefix 'Old.' might instead refer to 'Old man' (*Shakespeare after Theory* 218nn.4 and 5). Concerning the performance of 'Sir John Old Castell', which allegedly took place in the household of the Lord Chamberlain, George Carey, on 6 March 1599/1600, Roslyn L. Knutson speculates that this might have been neither Shakespeare's play nor the two-part *Sir John Oldcastle* written for the Admiral's Men, but another, lost play (95–7).

[3] For the name change and a call to substitute 'Oldcastle' for 'Falstaff' in modern editions, see Gary Taylor, 'Fortunes of Oldcastle'. For arguments against the name change, see Kastan, *Shakespeare after Theory* 83–96. On the question of censorship, see Dutton, *Mastering the Revels* 102–7; Clare, *'Art Made Tongue-Tied'* 76–80. On the court context of the Oldcastle controversy, see Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics* 401–34; Gibbon; White, 'Shakespeare, the Cobhams'.

[4] See Gary Taylor, 'Fortunes of Oldcastle' 98–100, and 'Forms of Opposition' 295; McAlindon, 'Perfect Answers' 100.



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inherent tendencies towards sedition. According to Kastan, Shakespeare's denigration of the Lollard martyr thus suggests 'a Protestant bias rather than a papist one, providing evidence of the very fracture in the Protestant community that made the accommodation of the Lollard past so problematic'.[5] That is to say, Shakespeare's satire of the Lollard martyr would have to be read as an attack on Puritanism rather than Protestantism as such.

Significantly, recent criticism has moved away from attempts to tease out Shakespeare's personal beliefs from his literary oeuvre, while nonetheless acknowledging his productive engagement with the various religious developments and forms of belief of his time. In *A Will to Believe* (2014), Kastan comes to the conclusion that 'Shakespeare declines to tell us what to believe, or to tell us what he believed',[6] and Andrew Hadfield, stopping short of calling Shakespeare a Nicodemite, has recently observed that '[i]f the works are thought to be Catholic then the life looks Catholic; if the works look Protestant then the life looks Protestant too'.[7] This chapter likewise avoids such vexing questions of confessional identity and instead attempts to shed new light on Shakespeare's treatment of church politics in the *Henry IV* plays. Central to my argument is the fact that Shakespeare turns the historical martyr Oldcastle into a notorious dissembler. While Oldcastle died a witness to the Lollard faith, Falstaff fakes his own death during the Battle of Shrewsbury in order to save his life. Rather than taking sides in a confessional conflict, Shakespeare vindicates the refusal to undergo martyrdom as such. Shakespeare's portrayal of the proto-Protestant martyr can thus be read as a reflection on dissimulation at large, including its religious, political, and, not least, theatrical implications.

This chapter begins by contextualising Shakespeare's portrayal of Falstaff in Oldcastle's Elizabethan afterlife. I argue that Shakespeare makes no claim, especially after the name change, that Falstaff is really supposed to be identified with Oldcastle. However, all of Shakespeare's plays featuring Falstaff are littered with references and allusions not only to the name change but also to Oldcastle's martyrdom. These establish an intertextual framework in which – or rather against which – Falstaff's own dissimulation as a means of self-preservation can be productively interpreted. Furthermore, Shakespeare ties Falstaff's dissimulation to a defence of the theatre itself. By doing so, I contend, he mitigates the stereotypical

[5] Kastan, *Shakespeare after Theory* 89. [6] Kastan, *A Will to Believe* 7.
[7] Hadfield, 'Biography and Belief' 23.

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hypocrisy of the stage Puritan, with which Falstaff is usually associated. Rather than a satire of the Lollard martyr, Shakespeare's transformation of Oldcastle into Falstaff can thus be read as a vindication of the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity. As such, he is sharply contrasted with Shakespeare's representation of the rebellious Archbishop Scrope in *2 Henry IV*, which highlights the seditious aspect that Elizabethan authorities perceived in any claim to martyrdom and resistance in the name of religion.

## Oldcastle in Tudor Historiography

In the sixteenth century, it was not only Catholics that had their doubts about whether Oldcastle really deserved praise as a martyr. There was one massive flaw in Oldcastle's image: he was not just burned as a heretic but also condemned for treason, and no challenge to political legitimacy was more feared in Elizabethan England than the spectre of religious resistance, be it Catholic or Puritan. Oldcastle was convicted of heresy in October 1413, but from then onward his career took a turn that made him a rather problematic figure for the sixteenth century. Oldcastle managed to escape from the Tower and in January became implicated in the so-called Ficket Field Rebellion, a failed uprising outside London. He was not captured, if he was ever present there, and continued to stir unrest before he was arrested in late 1417. According to a contemporary chronicle, Oldcastle declared before Parliament that the assembly had no right to judge him as long as Richard II was still alive, a reference to the pseudo-Richard that the Scots had set up in order to justify their invasion into England earlier that year. Finally, Oldcastle was simultaneously hanged and burned as a traitor to God and King.[8]

John Bale's *Brefe chronycle* (1544) and Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* went to great lengths to clear Oldcastle of the charge of treason, to repudiate the rebellious intention of the Ficket Field assembly, and to establish the Lollard martyr as an exemplary forerunner of English Protestantism. Some Tudor chronicles adopted this Protestant revisionism. Richard Grafton, for instance, writes in his account of the Ficket Field rebellion that 'it is not like to be true' that the assembly had a seditious purpose.[9] Grafton further takes a sympathetic view of Oldcastle's execution, stating that '[s]ome think that the offence of thys Syr Jhon Oldecastell, was neither so greuous nor so heynous as it was inforced to bee' and that Oldcastle was

[8] For the historical Lord Cobham, see Waugh. [9] Grafton IIIv.

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merely persecuted for questioning the privileges of the clergy.[10] However, most chronicles remained rather vague and uncommitted in comparison to Bale and Foxe. Edward Hall, for instance, concludes his discussion of the rebellion as follows: 'The iudgemment . . . I leaue to men indifferent. For surely all coniectures be not true, nor all writynges are not the Gospel, and therefore because I was nether a witness of the facte, nor present at the deede I ouerpasse that matter and begyn another'.[11] Finally, some chronicles, like John Stow's *Annales of England* (1592), reproduced pre-Protestant condemnations of Oldcastle, as will be seen later in this chapter. Suffice it to say for now that Oldcastle remained a controversial and divisive figure, and Shakespeare's mockery of him was, even if it may have insulted the Elizabethan Lord Cobham, by no means exceptionally iconoclastic in terms of the Lollard's more general historiographical afterlife.[12]

However, Shakespeare's principal source for the rough storyline of Falstaff was not provided by the chronicles but by his dramatic predecessor, *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*. Published in 1598, the play was presumably staged in the late 1580s and arguably was an important model for Shakespeare's two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V*.[13] One of the members of the young prince's band of robbers in *The Famous Victories* is alternately named 'Sir John Oldcastle' or 'Jockey'. The character's youthful exploits, which are also prominent in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays, may not have been meant as an insult. Even Bale admitted that Oldcastle's 'youth was full of wanton wildness before he knew the scriptures'.[14] In fact, despite its potentially delicate subject matter, the politics of *The Famous Victories* are perversely innocent. While the historical Oldcastle refused to acknowledge the authority of the Lancastrian king, deferring instead to Richard II, who was allegedly still alive in Scotland,[15] no trace of the Lollard's rebellious nature is to be found in the play.

In *The Famous Victories*, Oldcastle may be a robber, but there is no suggestion whatsoever that he will eventually turn against his King. On the contrary, once the prince is crowned, Oldcastle dutifully observes his

[10] Ibid. 113r. [11] Hall a3r.

[12] On Oldcastle's historiographical afterlife, see further Patterson, 'Sir John Oldcastle'. Notably, there is critical disagreement on Holinshed's position on the Oldcastle controversy. Thomas S. Freeman and Susannah Brietz Monta, in 'Holinshed and Foxe', argue convincingly that Holinshed was decidedly less sympathetic towards Oldcastle than Patterson suggests. For a more comprehensive account of Oldcastle's afterlife and the sources for Falstaff's character, see also Baeske.

[13] I cite from the critical edition of *The Famous Victories* contained in *The Oldcastle Controversy*, eds. Corbin and Sedge 145–99.

[14] Bale 7. [15] Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle* 2:729.

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former fellow-bandit's aura of divinity: 'Oh, how it did me good to see the King when he was crowned! Methought his seat was like the figure of heaven, and his person like unto a god' (9.19–21). The political whitewashing continues as the controversial legitimacy of the Lancastrian dynasty is brushed aside with a crude act of political amnesia. When Henry Bolingbroke vaguely tells his son 'how hardly I came by [the crown], and how hardly I have maintained it' (8.57), the latter replies: 'Howsoever you came by it, I know not; but now I have it from you, and from you I will keep it' (8.58–9). The author(s) of *The Famous Victories* thus judiciously try to evade the sensitive political issues of the play's source materials and re-enact what Paul Strohm has described as a specifically Lancastrian 'program of *official* forgetfulness: a forgetfulness embracing their own dynastic origins, their predecessor's fate, the promises and opportunistic alliances which had gained them a throne'.[16] In *The Famous Victories*, the deposition of Richard II is a non-event.

In his treatment of Oldcastle/Falstaff, Shakespeare ostensibly follows the structural template established by *The Famous Victories* rather than that of the chronicles. That is, he limits himself to Hal and Falstaff's friendship without representing the latter's eventual estrangement from the King as a heretic and traitor. However, Shakespeare is arguably much more willing to explore the ideological troubles of the early Lancastrian dynasty, on both the political and the religious front. For instance, when the future Henry V asserts the legitimacy of his claim to the crown in the presence of his father, the play echoes *The Famous Victories*: 'You won it, wore it, kept it, gave it me; / Then plain and right must my possession be' (2H4 4.3.351–2). However, one might rather speak of a parody of *The Famous Victories*, considering that Shakespeare's plays lack the complete political amnesia of their predecessor and revolve to a large extent around the loss of legitimacy that followed the deposition of Richard II, which the prince denies so vigorously at this point. Throughout the play, Jonathan Baldo notes, 'historical memory appears to be the rebels' trump card',[17] as is evident in their frequent allusions to Richard's deposition. Neither is the transformation of Oldcastle into Falstaff so complete as to render the Lollard's political and religious legacy entirely intransparent. Paradoxically, Shakespeare invokes the name change in conspicuous moments of forgetting. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Mistress Page declares that she 'can never hit on's name' (3.1.22), and Fluellen's memory in *Henry V* is equally compromised: 'I have forgot his

[16] Strohm 196. [17] Baldo 68.

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name' (4.7.48–9). Presumably, Isabel Karremann speculates,[18] such oddly collective onomastic amnesia could not have failed to remind audiences and readers of the martyr, whose name had so ostentatiously been consigned to oblivion in Shakespeare's plays.

This dynamic of forgetting and remembering Oldcastle's name is in line with Baldo's observation that Shakespeare 'does not simply avoid the difficult inheritance of Lollardy. Instead, he reminds us of what power wishes us to forget, calling attention to the divisions within historical memory in both Lancastrian and Elizabethan England'.[19] While *The Famous Victories* might be considered a *result* of the Lancastrian programme of forgetting, Shakespeare rather sheds light on political and confessional *processes* of forgetting and thus retains an intertextual framework that continuously highlights the contrast between the martyr Oldcastle and the dissembler Falstaff. Even though Shakespeare does not actually represent Oldcastle's treason and martyrdom and follows the politically more anodyne storyline of his dramatic predecessor, this chapter illustrates how Shakespeare's plays both displace and transform, but do not dismiss, the challenge to political and religious authority which the historical Oldcastle embodied.

## Falstaff Redivivus

Part of the editorial controversy over whether Oldcastle's name should be restored in modern editions of Shakespeare's plays centres on the extent to which Falstaff has become a distinct character that is no longer, especially in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, related to the historical Lord Cobham. Regardless of the intentions with which Shakespeare may first have conceived the character of Oldcastle/Falstaff, the fat knight eventually took on a life of his own, especially in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, which could no longer be conflated with the historical Oldcastle. As David Bevington argues in the single-text edition of *1 Henry IV* for The Oxford Shakespeare, '"Falstaff" had become a fictional entity, requiring a single name. Since that name could no longer be "Oldcastle", it had to be "Falstaff", in *1 Henry IV* as in the later plays'.[20] However, even if the Falstaff of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is not meant to be identified with the historical Lord Cobham and was never called 'Oldcastle' to begin with, the character Falstaff is contaminated with too many traces of the historical Oldcastle – in *all* plays in which he appears or is mentioned – in

[18] Karremann 120. [19] Baldo 71. [20] Shakespeare, *King Henry IV Part 1*, ed. Bevington 108.

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order for the Lollard martyr simply to be ignored. This does not mean that the historical Oldcastle should be read back into Shakespeare's dramatic character, but rather the contrary: even though the similarities between the two keep haunting Shakespeare's plays, the fact that Falstaff is *not* Oldcastle is a central aspect of his character. As the epilogue of *2 Henry IV* informs us, 'Oldcastle died martyr, and this is not the man' (30–1). We are justified in taking the epilogue at face value. Still, the invocation of Oldcastle is important because many aspects of Falstaff's behaviour and speech patterns can be fully appreciated only against the foil of the Lollard martyr. His dissimulation and conformity gain their full meaning only in contrast to the alternative of resistance and martyrdom, embodied by the historical Oldcastle, whom Shakespeare's plays refuse to forget entirely.

As Richard Wilson has shown, numerous traces of Oldcastle's fiery demise are still to be found in Shakespeare's plays.[21] Falstaff is described as a 'roasted Manningtree ox' (1H4 2.4.440), he 'sweats to death' (1H4 2.2.105) in the fiasco of the Gadshill robbery, and he is eventually compared to 'a candle, the better part burnt out' (2H4 1.2.152–3). Even as the aforementioned epilogue insists that Falstaff is not identical with the Lollard martyr, we learn that 'Falstaff shall die of a sweat' (2H4 29) or, as Nell Quickly puts it in *Henry V*, 'he is so shaked of a burning quotidian tertian that it is most lamentable to behold' (2.1.118–20). Allusions to Oldcastle's martyrdom continue in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Falstaff complains that the court 'would melt me out of my fat drop by drop' (4.5.91), Mistress Quickly demands that Falstaff's innocence be tested 'with trial fire' (5.5.84), and the fairies in Windsor Forest '[p]inch him and burn him and turn him about, / Till candle and starlight and moonshine be out' (5.5.101–2). However, though sweating and melting, Falstaff does not burn for the truth of the Gospel.

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the only thing that is on fire is Falstaff's libido. He observes that 'the appetite of [Mistress Page's] eye did seem to scorch me up like a burning glass' (1.3.63–4), and the fairies later sing: 'Lust is but a bloody fire, / Kindled with unchaste desire, / Fed in heart, whose flames aspire, / As thoughts do blow them, higher and higher' (5.5.95–8). The jealous Ford even more explicitly clothes his declaration of repentance to his wife in religious terms: 'Now doth thy honor stand, / In him that was of late an heretic, / As firm as faith' (4.4.8–10). Such talk of heresy and constancy recalls Oldcastle's martyrdom, especially because Ford, when

[21] Wilson, 'Too Long for a Play' 51–2.

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spying on Falstaff, chooses as a pseudonym the name 'Brooke', that is, the name of the Elizabethan inheritors of Oldcastle's title.[22] However, all these allusions to martyrdom remain metaphors and merely reinforce the contrast between the heroic martyr of old and the silver-tongued and incombustible *bon vivant*, who got away to 'laugh this sport o'er by a country fire' (Wiv. 5.5.234).

The plays' concern with religious controversies is also evident in more contemporary allusions, in particular in Falstaff's Puritan tendencies. Falstaff is remarkably well-versed in the Scriptures. Naseeb Shaheen assigns twenty-three of fifty-five Biblical references in *1 Henry IV* to Falstaff and observes that 'Shakespeare makes him a fallen knight who rejects his religious background, facetiously paraphrases Scripture, and frequently mimics Puritan idiom'.[23] In *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton* (2000), Kristen Poole likewise highlights Falstaff's thinking in categories that had become crucial to the Puritan vision,[24] such as his justification of purse-taking in terms of vocation. Similarly, his concern with the difference between the 'saints' and the 'wicked', when he berates Hal for being 'able to corrupt a saint' (1H4 1.2.88), betrays a Puritan mindset, as does his admission that he is 'little better than one of the wicked' (1H4 1.2.91). Contrary to Shaheen, Poole further argues that Falstaff does not deliberately parody Puritanism but is himself a parody of Puritanism in the vein of Martin Marprelate.[25] Like Martin, Falstaff is a quick-witted and carnivalesque figure who shares traits with the Lord of Misrule and stands out with his grotesque, Rabelaisian physicality.

There are residual traces of Oldcastle's rebellion in Falstaff's irreverent taunts against Hal's royal status, which would also have resonated with contemporary fears of a Puritan revolt.[26] For instance, Falstaff declares: 'I'll be a traitor then, when thou art king' (1H4 1.2.138–9). At another point, he tells Prince Hal: 'If I do not beat thee out of thy kingdom with a dagger of lath and drive all thy subjects afore thee like a flock of wild geese, I'll never wear hair on my face more' (1H4 2.4.130–3). One might further add that when Falstaff protests that he will 'be damned for never a king's son in Christendom' (1H4 1.2.93–4), an early modern audience might have thought of Acts 5:29, 'We ought [*sic*] rather to obey God then men', one

[22] The name was changed to 'Broome' in the Folio for reasons that are far from clear. For an overview of different explanations, see Gibbon 114–16.

[23] Shaheen 408. On Falstaff's Biblical references, see also Hamlin 231–70.

[24] Poole 35–6.

[25] Ibid. 37. For the alleged origins of the stage Puritan in the Marprelate controversy, see also Collinson, 'Theatre Constructs Puritanism' 164–7.

[26] Poole 38–9.

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of the most important blueprints for religious resistance. However, the threat of rebellion is made only in jest and remains entirely inconsequential. The authors of *1 Sir John Oldcastle* (1599), which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 3, accused Shakespeare of turning the martyr into a 'pampered glutton' and an 'agèd counsellor to youthful sins' (prol. 6–7), but they did not charge him with slandering Oldcastle as a traitor.

Falstaff's subversive tendencies are mostly contained, at least in *1 Henry IV*, in a carnivalesque holiday setting without serious consequences.[27] However, the repeated invocation of the nexus of religious dissent, martyrdom, and rebellion serves as a constant reminder of the historical Oldcastle's revolt and arguably provides a foil against which Shakespeare's treatment of Falstaff gains its specific contours. Unlike Oldcastle, Falstaff exudes life, and the very idea of martyrdom or any other sort of noble death is incomprehensible to him. According to Falstaff's 'catechism' (1H4 5.1.140) – ironically, a genre particularly popular with puritans – honour is nothing but a 'word' (5.1.134), or 'Air' (5.1.135), 'insensible . . . to the dead' (5.10.137). Shakespeare's fat knight has no appetite for posthumous fame, let alone the crown of martyrdom. When Falstaff comes close to something like martyrdom in his encounter with the imposing Earl of Douglas in the Battle of Shrewsbury, he simply throws himself on the ground and plays possum.[28]

In the light of the fate of the historical Oldcastle, Falstaff's miraculous resurrection after the battle is a blasphemous joke. However, this perversion of the very idea of an *Imitatio Christi* culminating in martyrdom was not without resonance in Oldcastle's controversial afterlife. To begin with, Oldcastle's constancy in confessing Christ was disputed, as Falstaff's counterfeiting in Shrewsbury might have reminded Shakespeare's audiences and readers. Bale reports that when Oldcastle was condemned for heresy, his opponents 'counterfeited an abjuration in his name' in order to discredit him,[29] as Foxe notes too.[30] In turn, Catholic controversialists

[27] However, for a perceptive analysis of how Falstaff's cynicism, corruption, and self-interest become increasingly predatory and abusive as he takes on more responsibilities in part 2, see Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics* 331–45.

[28] The episode of Falstaff counterfeiting his own death appears to have been Shakespeare's own contribution to the Oldcastle myth, but may have been inspired by the clown Strumbo in *The Lamentable Tragedie of Locrine* (Baeske 88), who likewise pretends to be dead and milks the comic potential of the situation for what it is worth: 'Let me alone, I tell thee, for I am dead' (2.6.95). Remarkably, *Locrine* was advertised on the title page of its first edition in 1595 as 'Newly set foorth, ouerseene and corrected, By *W. S.*'. Lukas Erne interprets the note as a misattribution that may have been meant to cash in on Shakespeare's reputation 'as an author of "lamentable" tragedies in the mid-1590s' (69). However, Peter Kirwan has reopened the case for the possibility of a Shakespearean revision of *Locrine* (127–38).

[29] Bale 46. [30] Foxe, *Acts and Monuments Online* 564–5.

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asserted the authenticity of the abjuration. In *A treatise of three conuersions* (1603–4), the Jesuit Robert Parsons triumphantly points out that Foxe 'setteth downe at length a very ample and earnest recantation of the said *Syr Iohn Oldcastle* taken out of the records, as authentically made as can be deuised'.[31] As Parson further remarks, Foxe 'saith nothinge at all against it: but only that it was deuised by the Bishops without his consent. Alleaginge no one author, wittnes, wrytinge, record, reason, or probable coniecture for proofs therof'.[32] Evidently, there was no cross-confessional consensus concerning Oldcastle's constancy.

There are further ways in which Falstaff invokes rather unflattering accounts of Oldcastle's martyrdom. The most compromising account of Oldcastle's martyrdom was provided by Oldcastle's contemporary Thomas Walsingham, whose *St Albans Chronicle* features an inventive but rather cowardly Oldcastle. Linguistic dexterity was also an integral part of the Oldcastle myth established in Bale's *Brefe chronycle*.[33] Walsingham, however, reads it not in the sense of Christ's promise to his future martyrs, 'for it shal be giuen you in that houre, what ye shal say' (Matt. 10:19), but as evidence for the Lollard's cowardly tergiversations and attempts to escape martyrdom. The Elizabethan John Stow renders Walsingham as follows:[34]

> the question was asked how he would excuse himselfe, and shewe why he should not be deemed to die: but he seeking other talke began to preach of the mercies of God, and that all mortal men that would be folowers of God, ought to prefer mercy aboue iudgemment, and that vengeance perteined onely to the Lorde, and ought not to be practised by them that worship God, but to be left to God alone: with many other words to detract the time, vntill the chiefe iustice admonished the regent not to suffer him to spende the time so vainely.[35]

This Oldcastle has evidently little to do with an upright and honest confession of Christ, but much in common with Shakespeare's Falstaff, who talks himself out of the fiasco of the Gadshill robbery, is able to change tactics on the spot, and spends time vainly indeed. Finally, Falstaff's own resurrection may well have reminded some of Shakespeare's audiences and readers of a prophecy that Oldcastle allegedly made before his death. Citing Walsingham, Stow writes: 'the last words he spake, was to Sir

[31] Parsons, *Three conuersions* Hh7v.
[32] Ibid. Hh8r. However, the abjuration is solely documented in the *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, hence possibly a forgery indeed (Waugh 455–6).
[33] Tom McAlindon, in 'Perfect Answers', claims that Falstaff's wit and linguistic skills go indeed back to Bale's account.
[34] Compare with Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle* 2:729. [35] Stow 572.

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Thomas of Erpingham, adiuring him, that if he saw him rise from death to life again, the third day, he would procure that his sect might be in peace & quiet'.[36] Oldcastle's defender John Speed accordingly complains in *The theatre of the empire of Great Britaine* (1612) that Walsingham had turned Oldcastle into 'a false Christ in rising again the third day'.[37]

Importantly, such denigrations of Oldcastle's martyrdom were by no means limited to a specifically Catholic perspective. Archbishop Parker had made Walsingham's chronicle available to a sixteenth-century readership with a new edition in 1574 as part of his antiquarian publishing programme, which served to provide the historiographical foundations for the English Reformation.[38] In his preface, Parker warns against old wives' tales and monkish fables,[39] but the account of Oldcastle, who plays a prominent role in the chronicle, remains unchallenged. In the following decades, Oldcastle's prophecy was gleefully cited by Catholic critics such as the Jesuit Parsons,[40] but also by the Protestant Stow, who had provided the manuscript for Parker's edition to begin with.[41] The view of Oldcastle as a sectarian charlatan was thus not simply a Catholic fringe opinion but found expression even in works with which Parker strove to shape the historical memory of the English Reformation.

When Shakespeare alludes to such denigrations of Oldcastle's martyrdom in the cowardly Falstaff, he is therefore not necessarily expressing a Catholic point of view. However, it might be equally misleading to read his treatment of Falstaff simply as an attack on the Puritan movement, with which the Lollards allegedly came to be associated towards the end of the sixteenth century, as Kastan has suggested.[42] In fact, there are crucial differences between Shakespeare on the one hand and Walsingham, Stow, or Parsons on the other. While the latter emphasise martyrdom as the touchstone of Oldcastle's character, which is accordingly found wanting, Shakespeare relativises the merits of martyrdom as such and offers a far more benevolent portrayal of Oldcastle's/Falstaff's dissimulation than any of the polemically invested and confessionalised takes on the Lollard's death. Falstaff is neither a traitor nor the religious maniac portrayed by Walsingham, Stow, or Parsons. Instead, he is a prudent survivor who

[36] Ibid. Compare with Walsingham, *St Albans Chronicle* 2:731. [37] Speed 637.
[38] See Robinson, '"Darke Speech"'. [39] Walsingham, *Historia breuis* ¶3r.
[40] Parsons, *Three conuersions* 2Q6r.
[41] Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought* 188n.27. For the probability that Shakespeare used Stow's *Annales* and/or *Chronicles* (1580), although certainly not as his main source, see 1H4 339–44; Shakespeare, *Second Part of King Henry* IV, ed. Humphreys xxxv.
[42] Kastan, *Shakespeare after Theory* 89.

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successfully avoids death on the battlefield and instead expires off-stage, in his own bed. Most importantly, Shakespeare elevates Falstaff's cowardice with a meta-theatrical vindication of dissimulation, which crystallises the religio-political implications of the medium of the theatre. Falstaff's dissimulation is thus inextricably tied up with the nature of theatricality as such.

## Falstaff and the Theatre

The meta-theatrical implications of dissimulation are particularly pronounced at the Battle of Shrewsbury. After Hotspur's death, Falstaff is worried that the fearsome warrior may be merely playing dead, as he did himself when he found himself vis-à-vis Douglas: 'How if he should counterfeit too and rise? By my faith, I am afraid he would prove the better counterfeit' (1H4 5.4.121–3). In a meta-theatrical sense, Falstaff's fears are obviously well-founded. The actor playing Hotspur is counterfeiting indeed and will rise from the dead once he is carried off-stage. Falstaff's suspicions remind the audience that any death – or martyrdom, for that matter – is always tainted with dissimulation when represented on stage.

As Baldo and Karremann further note,[43] Falstaff's own resurrection might likewise be read as a meta-theatrical reflection on the ability of the stage to bring the dead back to life or, at least, to lend them a voice and a face. In the history play, Thomas Nashe writes in *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592), 'our forefathers valiant acts (that haue line long buried in rustie brasse and worme-eaten bookes) are reuiued, and they themselues raised from the graue of Obliuion, and brought to pleade their aged Honours in open presence'.[44] However, while Nashe here ennobles the theatre as 'a rare exercise of virtue',[45] Shakespeare freely admits the theatre's kinship with 'counterfeiting' of a less than heroic scale. Rather than sidestepping the issue of the theatre's dependence on dissimulation, as Nashe does by touting its moral exemplarity, Falstaff's meta-theatricality deliberately taps into contemporary controversies surrounding theatrical 'counterfeiting' and its dubious moral status. Stephen Gosson, for instance, notes that stage players 'learne to counterfeit, and so to sinne'.[46] According to Philip Stubbes, the theatre is the right place to go 'if you will learne falshood; if you will learn cosenage; if you will learn to deceiue; if you will learn to play the Hipocrit, to cogge, lye, and falsifie'; even worse, 'if you will learne to

[43] Baldo 66; Karremann 86–7. [44] Nashe 1:212. [45] Ibid. [46] Gosson E6r.

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murther, slaie, kill, picke, steal, robbe, and roue' or 'to rebel against Princes' and to 'commit treasons'.[47] In short, the theatres are 'Schooles or Seminaries of pseudo christianitie',[48] that is, of religious dissimulation, where one may learn to cloak one's crimes with pious hypocrisy.

Many of these concerns are rehearsed in Shakespeare's early plays. In *Richard III*, for instance, Buckingham boasts that his histrionic abilities qualify him as the ideal partner in crime for the Machiavellian Richard:

> Tut, I can counterfeit the deep tragedian,
> Speak and look back, and pry on every side,
> Tremble and start at wagging of a straw,
> Intending deep suspicion. Ghastly looks
> Are at my service, like enforced smiles,
> And both are ready in their offices,
> At any time to grace my stratagems. (3.5.5–11)

Richard himself is, of course, likewise an accomplished actor who has mastered the high art of political theatre and internalised the Machiavellian maxim that '[o]ne must be a great feigner and dissembler'.[49] As he demonstrates in his hollow performance of piety before the Londoners (*Richard III* 3.7), the 'schools of pseudo-christianity' have served him well.

Yet, even at this stage, Shakespeare hardly subscribes to an unconditional ethos of sincerity. Rather, there seems to be a hint of parody when Richard styles himself early on as 'a plain man' whose 'simple truth must be abused' because he 'cannot flatter and look fair, / Smile in men's faces, smooth, deceive and cog' (1.1.47–8). Evidently, the ideal of sincerity can itself be nothing but a pose, as becomes clear when Richard parrots the invectives of the likes of Stubbes against those who 'will learn to play the Hipocrit, to cogge, lye, and falsifie'. Of course, Richard claims to condemn such dissimulation only as a cover for his own murderous intents. As I have noted in the introduction of this book, the theatre frequently displayed such scepticism about sincerity in order to cut nonconformists down to size and to subvert their alleged case against the theatre. In the *Henry IV* plays, however, Shakespeare offers a more innocuous portrayal of dissimulation that considerably softens the edge of anti-theatrical polemics that Shakespeare still works through in *Richard III*.

Falstaff's use of dissimulation hardly amounts to Machiavellian manipulation and power-politics, but is more concerned with inventive forms of self-preservation. In *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, for instance, Falstaff

[47] Stubbes 1:145. [48] Ibid. [49] Machiavelli, *Prince*, ch. 18.

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counterfeits in order to save himself as follows: 'I was like to be apprehended for the witch of Brentford. But that my admirable dexterity of wit, my counterfeiting the action of an old woman, delivered me, the knave constable had set me i'the stocks, i'the common stocks, for a witch' (4.5.108–13). In *1 Henry IV*, Falstaff likewise justifies counterfeiting as a means of self-preservation, and this time his justification of dissimulation is simply too good to be rejected out of hand. After his brief run-in with Douglas, Falstaff says to himself:

> 'Sblood, 'twas time to counterfeit, or that hot termagant Scot had paid me, scot and lot too. Counterfeit? I lie; I am no counterfeit. To die is to be a counterfeit, for he is but the counterfeit of a man who hath not the life of a man. But to counterfeit dying when a man thereby liveth is to be no counterfeit but the true and perfect image of life indeed. (5.4.113–18)

Falstaff's verbal dexterity and intellectual ingenuity are in full display in his metaphorical punning and in his vertiginous paradoxes. Falstaff playfully interweaves truthfulness with dissimulation with a version of the liar's paradox in his declaration 'I lie' – a strange way to insist that he is 'no counterfeit'. To make things even more convoluted, Falstaff is not 'lying' – and therefore lying by claiming to 'lie' – in an additional sense, namely, by punning on the verb's homonym. Falstaff 'lie[s]' next to 'noble Percy' a few lines earlier, but the stage directions inform us that '*Falstaff riseth up*' (5.4.109) immediately after Hal has left, so he no longer lies on the ground by the time he declares that he lies.[50] Falstaff's ingenious wordplay is an insistent onslaught on the categories of 'truth', 'lying', and 'fiction' and culminates in his take on the counterfeiting metaphor, which confounds any distinction between authenticity and dissimulation. Falstaff does not simply justify dissimulation as a means of self-preservation; he also justifies it as a positively life-giving principle and performs a *reductio ad absurdum* of the idea of counterfeiting as a mere copy, a second-grade form of reality. If death is a counterfeit of life, Falstaff suggests, life-preserving dissimulation cannot possibly be dismissed as reprehensible counterfeiting.

Falstaff's justification of dissimulation as a means of self-preservation is also closely aligned to a revaluation of theatrical dissimulation. Shakespeare carefully guides readers and audiences towards a meta-theatrical interpretation of Falstaff's 'counterfeiting' when Falstaff suspects that Hotspur may be counterfeiting, which the actor who plays Hotspur is indeed doing.

[50] On Shakespeare's habit of punning on 'lying', frequently with sexual innuendo, see Ewbank 137–8.

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Unlike in the period's anti-theatrical pamphlets, however, counterfeiting does not debase the currency of reality. It preserves 'the true and perfect image of life', a puzzling self-description on Falstaff's part. How can an image be not only 'true' but even 'perfect', without being the thing itself? Falstaff arguably draws attention to his ontological status as a dramatic character when he calls himself an 'image of life', but, again, he does not establish a clear hierarchy between reality and representation when he characterises this image as 'true' and 'perfect'.

Like the protagonist of *Richard III*, Falstaff invokes the imperative of truthfulness, as a correspondence between essence and appearance, only to subvert it ironically. Thus, Falstaff protests that he is 'not a double man' (5.4.138) shortly after, when the prince, surprised by Falstaff's appearance, seems not to trust his own eyes: 'Thou art not what thou seem'st' (5.4.137). However, Falstaff's insistence that he is what he seems to be is of course belied by the many senses in which he is indeed a 'double man'. Falstaff might be considered a 'double man' because he is carrying Hotspur's corpse on his back, but also because Hal may believe him to be a ghost, who is 'double' in the sense of having returned from the dead. Baldo points out numerous additional ways in which Falstaff might be considered a 'double man',[51] for instance with regard to the tension between the historical Oldcastle and the fictional character Falstaff, or the different and mutually exclusive assessments of the Lollard martyr in Tudor historiography. And once more Baldo notes that Falstaff's reflections on duplicity are also legible meta-theatrically in the sense that he is both a character and an actor, perhaps even an actor who doubles roles, as was so often necessitated by the large cast of history plays.[52] Falstaff's playful disavowal of not being what he seems to be amounts to a dizzying proliferation of meanings and ambiguous explorations of his own irreducible multiplicity, which confounds any simple essentialism. Arguably no other character from Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre straddles the divide between reality and representation, life and theatre, with such virtuosity as Falstaff.

Not only in Shrewsbury but throughout the whole play, pretence, role-play, and reinvention on the spot are not just manoeuvres of deception; they are at the core of Falstaff's character and his vitality. Falstaff is a notorious liar, but his lies and performances are, for the most part, not meant to deceive and could therefore be characterised as what

[51] Baldo 55–61. [52] Ibid.

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Augustine called 'jocose lies'.[53] Falstaff's lies primarily serve to demonstrate his quick wit and to amuse, rather than deceive, his listeners. When Falstaff tries to talk himself out of the fiasco of the Gadshill robbery, Prince Hal remarks: 'These lies are like their father that begets them, gross as a mountain, open, palpable' (1H4 2.4.118–19). This transparency and artificiality of Falstaff's lies make him a thoroughly literary and theatrical figure, and it is only natural that after his virtuoso performance after the Gadshill robbery, he and Hal intend to spin his fantastic tale into 'a play extempore' (2.4.271).[54] Nonetheless, we are also told that Falstaff and his fictions are not simply a form of insubstantial escapism for a young prince who is reluctant to take on his dynastic responsibilities, but the very fabric of reality: 'Banish plump Jack and banish all the world' (2.4.466–7).

With his insistent paradoxes and contradictions, Falstaff questions not only the distinction between truth and lying but also the distinction between life and mimesis. He is the dramatic equivalent of the baroque *trompe l'oeil*. With Falstaff, the transition from real life to dramatic fiction is always seamless. He anticipates what Anne Righter described as the conception of theatricality in Shakespeare's late romances, a conflation of art and life, which both 'restores the dignity of the play metaphor, and, at the same time, destroys it'.[55] As with Hermione's statue in *The Winter's Tale*, the distinction between life and art, between authenticity and dissimulation, ultimately founders. Falstaff is an ontological provocation, which not only amounts to a justification of dissimulation as a means of self-preservation but also subverts the imperative of sincerity that undergirded the case against theatrical dissimulation.

However, Falstaff's dissimulation in Shrewsbury does not end with merely playing dead; it quickly morphs into something more sinister when he suspects that Hotspur may be doing the same. As a consequence, he stabs the corpse in order to make sure that he is truly dead and claims that he was the one who killed Hotspur, 'look[ing] to be either earl or duke' (5.4.142) as a reward for his heroic deed. And not only is Falstaff brazen enough to protest that he is no 'double man' but he also complains 'how this world is given to lying' (5.4.145–6) when Hal points out that 'I killed [Percy] myself, and saw thee dead' (5.4.144). Remarkably, however, the young prince eventually blesses Falstaff's fabulous account of his

[53] See ch. 2 of *On Lying* (Augustine, *Treatises* 54).
[54] For a reading of Falstaff, especially in *1 Henry IV*, as an embodiment and celebration of theatricality, see also Ghose 148–63.
[55] Righter 192.

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supposed duel with Hotspur in provocatively religious language: 'For my part, if a lie may do thee grace, / I'll gild it with the happiest terms I have' (5.4.157–8). Especially in the light of the contrast between Falstaff's dissimulation and Oldcastle's martyrdom, the fact that the prince 'graces' not a martyr but a dissembler is significant. However, Hal's behaviour at this moment is oddly incongruous with the chivalric ethos that he displays elsewhere in the play. After all, he is not only relinquishing his claim to Hotspur's 'glorious deeds' (3.2.146) and 'budding honours' (5.4.71); he is also conniving at Falstaff's desecration of Hotspur's corpse, whose 'great heart' (5.4.86) he claims to admire even in death and to whose body he shortly before administered 'fair rites of tenderness' (5.4.97). Even moments after his most heroic exploits, Hal surprisingly endorses Falstaff's usurping claim to martial prowess.

It is worth recalling that the prince has just been equally tolerant of Hotspur's sins, whose 'ignominy' he is willing to let rest 'in the grave, / But not remembered in thy epitaph' (5.4.99–100). However, Hal's 'rites of oblivion', as Karremann calls them,[56] are not simply to be taken as a sign of benevolence on the part of the young prince. On the contrary, his covering of Hotspur's face with his own 'favours' (5.4.95) and his refusal to remember Hotspur's rebellion buries the latter's challenge to the doubtful legitimacy of the Lancaster dynasty in oblivion and ultimately 'serves to commemorate the victor's identity rather than that of the deceased'.[57] When Falstaff distorts the memory of Hotspur even more drastically by claiming to have killed him, Karremann further suggests, Falstaff 'asserts the efficacy of Lancastrian memory politics and simultaneously repudiates it through parody', although the subversive potential of this parodic repetition seems to be contained, at least within the play-world, by Hal's acceptance of Falstaff's false claim.[58] At any rate, calculated acts of forgetting are an essential aspect of the Lancasters' political style, which goes hand in hand with their penchant for duplicity and manipulation.

Falstaff's counterfeiting mirrors, of course, that of Bolingbroke in the main plot. Bolingbroke counterfeits his own royal persona in Shrewsbury and 'hath many marching in his coats' (5.3.25), with no less significant but somewhat different meta-theatrical implications than Falstaff. Even though Bolingbroke's counterfeiting equally serves to preserve life, it seems to backfire and to debase, rather than preserve, the currency of kingship by reducing it to the trappings of a mere

[56] Karremann 83. [57] Ibid. [58] Ibid. 88.

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theatrical role from which the real thing can no longer be distinguished.[59] His son, however, is more successful in turning his duplicitous performances into effective political realities, as when he calculatingly appropriates the persona of the prodigal son so that his 'reformation' may 'show more goodly' (1.2.203–4). Prince John, who is likewise present when Hal turns a blind eye to Falstaff's claim to have slain Hotspur, eventually emulates his brother's manipulation of appearances in an even more problematic register in *2 Henry IV*, when he tricks the rebels into surrendering with ambiguous promises. Hal's tolerance for Falstaff's lies may be seen to betray a remnant of sympathy for an old boon companion, but this tolerance is also one of a piece with his own readiness to dissemble and to forget the past, when it is convenient to so, which will continue to coexist with his chivalric heroism even in *Henry V*, a play that in Greenblatt's words 'deftly registers every nuance of royal hypocrisy, ruthlessness, and bad faith'.[60] The dangerously seductive theatricality of a dissembling tyrant like *Richard III* is thus not entirely left behind in the *Henry IV* and *Henry V* plays. However, it is incorporated into a more comprehensive and nuanced vision of dissimulation and of its place in life. As Ewbank has pointed out, it makes little sense to speak of a unified 'concept of the liar in Shakespeare',[61] and this is also true for dissimulation. Unlike contemporary anti-theatrical writers, Shakespeare canvasses a broad and ambivalent spectrum of dissimulation as an integral aspect of life, ranging from harmless entertainment and theatrical vitality over legitimate self-preservation and debasing self-multiplication to ruthless self-advancement.

Jeffrey Knapp has argued for 'a protheatrical tradition that depicted acting as the key to church conformity, and church conformity as the key to acting'.[62] Falstaff, who rejects the martyrdom of his historical model in favour of theatrical self-invention, could be seen to embody this tradition like few other characters on the Elizabethan stage. In this light, Kristen Poole's assessment that Falstaff is also to be considered a blueprint of the stage Puritan raises questions. Hypocrisy is indeed a typical trait of the stage Puritan, but Shakespeare largely refrains from externalising and projecting unease with dissimulation on a Puritan scapegoat, as some of his contemporaries did.[63] While there are many dissemblers in the *Henry*

[59] Compare with Kastan's insightful discussion of royal counterfeiting in his introduction to 1H4 62–9.
[60] Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 56. [61] Ewbank 146. [62] Knapp 17.
[63] See Introduction.

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*IV* plays, Falstaff is arguably not only the most harmless but also the most attractive of them. To be clear, Shakespeare's portrayal of Falstaff's dissimulation hardly suggests any sympathy for Puritan nonconformity. However, if Falstaff is indeed a stereotypically hypocritical stage Puritan, Shakespeare's recognition of the aesthetic potential of such stereotypes inevitably blunts the edge of the confessional polemics that had given birth to them. Instead of condemning Falstaff's dissimulation, Shakespeare even integrates it into a justification of theatricality that does not aim to refute the charge of dissimulation but acknowledges it, not only as a source of entertainment but also as a life-giving principle, an indispensable thread in the very fabric of reality.

## Turning Insurrection to Religion

Shakespeare's defence of the theatre and its concomitant transformation of a traitor/martyr into a hypocritical *bon vivant* are not without political implications. Time and again, Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre raises the question of whether those in power have any claim to the inner life of their subjects and whether the latter are obliged to align their inward thoughts with their outward words. A critical attitude towards the category of the thought crime is evident as early as in *Richard III*, when King Edward regrets the execution of his brother Clarence: 'My brother killed no man; his fault was thought, / and yet his punishment was bitter death' (2.1.105–6). Similarly, Isabella in *Measure for Measure* insists that '[t]houghts are no subjects, / Intents but merely thoughts' (5.1.454–44). Finally, *King Lear* too can be read as a parable about what happens when kings force their subjects to wear their hearts on their sleeve.

Such critical observations on the intrusion of overreaching magistrates into the consciences of their subjects may tempt modern readers to recognise in Shakespeare a fellow-liberal *avant la lettre*. However, it is important to remember that martyrdom, as an uncompromising alignment of inward convictions and outward actions, was always a potential act of political disobedience in the pre-secular early modern state. Especially in the case of the English model of royal supremacy, defying the Church was tantamount to defying the monarchy. Hence, the alternative of outward conformity on the dissenter's part was not only seen as a right to privacy but also conceived as a political duty by *politiques* such as Jean Bodin: 'when we may not publikely vse the true religion ... least by contemning of the religion which is publikely

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receiued, we should seeme to allure or stirre the subiects vnto impietie or sedition, it is better to come vnto the publike seruice'.[64] In turn, political authorities had good reasons to leave the inner life of their subjects alone, so as to avoid a conflict of conscience between spiritual and political allegiance that was liable to subvert political authority. As I argue in the remainder of this chapter, Shakespeare explores this relationship between secular and religious obedience and the political status of dissimulation in the contrast between the politically quietist Falstaff and the rebellious Richard Scrope, Archbishop of Canterbury. Even though the 'real' Oldcastle is absent from Shakespeare's plays, the nexus of martyrdom and treason, which he embodied in Elizabethan historiography and confessional polemics, is thus present in the person of Scrope and his fellow-rebels, whose insurrection is likewise cloaked in the language of religious resistance. Whereas *The Famous Victories*, Shakespeare's dramatic predecessor, simply neutralises the delicate political questions raised by the historical Oldcastle, Shakespeare displaces them on other characters in the play.

Scrope's actual reasons for joining the rebellion remain rather opaque in Shakespeare's plays.[65] In his *Civile Wars*,[66] Samuel Daniel suggests that the Archbishop's purpose was to take revenge for his cousin William Scrope (mistaken for a brother in Shakespeare's main sources, Holinshed and Daniel, as well as by Shakespeare himself), Earl of Wiltshire, who was executed in the political turmoil of Richard II's deposition. Shakespeare mentions the execution in *Richard II* (3.2.141–2) and briefly alludes to it in *1 Henry IV* when Worcester tells Hotspur that the Archbishop 'bears hard / His brother's death at Bristol, the Lord Scrope' (1.3.265–6).[67] However, the execution is not mentioned as a motive for rebellion in *2 Henry IV*. Instead, the rebels and Scrope in particular repeatedly invoke Richard's deposition and Henry Bolingbroke's usurpation of the throne. In doing so, they resume an argument that the historical Oldcastle, according to some sources, had made in a similar form. Quoting from Walsingham, Stow records that Oldcastle refused to be judged by the representatives of the Lancastrian monarchy 'so long as his liege lord king Richard was aliue, and in the realme of Scotlande'.[68] What is at stake in

[64] Bodin, *Of the lawes and cvstomes [République]* 539–40.
[65] On the historical Archbishop Scrope, see McNiven.
[66] Daniel, *Civile Wars* 4.79.
[67] Holinshed writes that 'to make their part seem good', the Percys had enlisted 'Richard Scroope, archbishop of Yorke, brother to the lord Scroope, whome king Henrie had caused to be beheaded at Bristow' (3.23). The motive is thus suggested, but not spelled out explicitly as by Daniel or Shakespeare.
[68] Stow 572.

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the chronicles as well as in the play is the legitimacy of the Lancastrian dynasty.[69] Just as Oldcastle's challenge to authority was political as well as religious, Scrope's participation in the rebellion marks the venture as both political and religious. This dynastic as well as spiritual challenge to authority cuts to the heart of the historical Lancastrians' efforts to cement their doubtful legitimacy by touting their commitment to promoting true religion,[70] which is reflected in Shakespeare's plays, for instance in Bolingbroke's commitment to a crusade.

Again, there is precedent in the sources for Shakespeare's treatment of Scrope. Holinshed, for instance, reports that Scrope promised 'forgiuenesse of sinnes to all them, whose hap it was to die in the quarrell' (3:36), and after the venture went awry, '[t]he archbishop suffered death verie constantlie, insomuch as the common people tooke it he died a martyr' (3:38). In Daniel's version, the Archbishop too uses his religious authority in order to support the uprising:

> And euen as *Canterburie* did produce
> A Pardon to aduance him to the Crown;
> The like now *Yorke* pronounces, to induce
> His faction for the pulling of him [i.e. Henry IV] down.
> (*Civile Wars* 4.76)

Such religious components also play an important role in *2 Henry IV*. During the negotiations between the rebels and the royal party, Prince John confronts the Archbishop in the following terms:

> . . . You have ta'en up,
> Under the counterfeited zeal of God
> The subjects of his substitute, my father,
> And both against the peace of heaven and him
> Have here upswarmèd them. (4.1.252–6)

As critics have noted,[71] the prince confronts the Archbishop in perfectly orthodox terms. His argument closely echoes the 'Homilee agaynst disobedience and wylful rebellion', which had been added to the second edition of the second tome of *The Book of Homilies* (1571) after the

[69] Notably, the play's explicit references to Richard are almost completely absent from the 1600 quarto edition of *2 Henry IV*, possibly as a result of censorship. With the rising tensions between the Earl of Essex and Queen Elizabeth around the time of publication, the political legacy of Richard's deposition seems to have become a difficult topic. The passages in question are 1.1.189–209; 1.3.85–108; 4.1.55–79; 4.1.101–37. For the censorship theory, see *Second Part of King Henry IV*, ed. Humphreys lxx–lxxiii; Clare, *'Art Made Tongue-Tied'* 68–70; Dutton, *Mastering the Revels* 262n.41.

[70] Rex 82–4. [71] Groves, *Texts and Traditions* 139–40.

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Northern Rising. According to the homily, rebels 'would pretende sundry causes, as the redresse of the common wealth . . . or reformation of religion (whereas rebellion is most agaynst all true religion)' and make a 'great shewe of holy meanyng by begynnyng their rebellions with a counterfet seruice of God'.[72] In *2 Henry IV*, Westmoreland accordingly accuses the Archbishop of 'seal[ing] this lawless bloody book / Of forged rebellion with a seal divine' (4.1.91–2). Even Morton, one of the rebels in *2 Henry IV*, observes that the Archbishop, '[s]uppos'd sincere and holy in his thoughts' (1.1.202), '[t]urns insurrection to religion' (1.1.201). Religious justifications for resistance are necessarily counterfeit, as the homily as well as Prince John point out (and Morton freely admits), because true religion demands obedience to the secular magistrate, God's substitute on earth.

By introducing the argument that religious resistance is a mere pretext for ulterior motives, Shakespeare invites us to revisit the ethical and political implications of Falstaff's dissimulation. The verbal parallel between Scrope's 'counterfeited zeal of God' and the homily's condemnation of 'a counterfet seruice of God' on the one hand and Falstaff's counterfeiting in Shrewsbury on the other troubles any simple opposition between a supposedly authentic martyrdom and dissimulation as a duplicitous means of self-preservation. As *2 Henry IV* suggests in line with the 'Homilee agaynst disobedience and wylful rebellion', any claim that one's rebellion is divinely sanctioned amounts to a hypocritical instrumentalisation of religion. Such hypocrisy is much more reprehensible than outward conformity with the Established Church, which is not only tolerable but falls under the scope of the political duties of the subject. Accordingly, Shakespeare presents the 'constant martyr', Archbishop Scrope, as the *real* hypocrite, whereas the temporising anti-martyr Falstaff emerges as the unsung hero of the Elizabethan settlement.

In his version of the Scrope rebellion, Shakespeare may reproduce the conservatism of official Tudor political theology, but, as already mentioned, the royal party in the play does not cut a very good figure either. Prince John and Westmoreland succeed in persuading the rebels to surrender only by means of an equivocating promise that their demands will be met, tricking them into believing that they may escape without punishment. While Daniel excuses this Machiavellian ruse by pointing out that Westmoreland's 'wit did ouerthrowe, / Without

[72] *The second Tome of Homilees* 588.

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a sword, all these great feares' and thus prevented a bloody battle,[73] Shakespeare does not paint over the sordid nature of the whole business. What is more, the treachery at Gaultree Forest mars the dream of unifying a wide range of political and religious positions under the newly established Lancastrian dynasty. As Shakespeare suggests, a pardon might have been more prudent. When discussing a possible truce before the negotiations with the royal party, the rebel Mowbray rightly suspects that the offer of reconciliation 'proceeds from policy, not love' (4.1.146). Hence he objects to the offer because he fears retaliation on the least occasion:

> . . . were our royal faiths martyrs in love,
> We shall be winnowed with so rough a wind
> That even our corn shall seem as light as chaff,
> And good from bad find no partition. (4.1.191–4)

That is to say, Mowbray does not believe in forgiveness but expects an undiscriminating purge, regardless of the sincerity of their submission. Mowbray's religious language at this point ('martyrs in love') anticipates the Biblical argumentation of Scrope's reply, as does his reference to corn and the partition of good from bad. Taking up Mowbray's cereal imagery, Scrope rejects Mowbray's fears with an allusion to the Biblical parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24–30). According to the Archbishop, the King

> . . . cannot so precisely weed this land
> As his misdoubts present occasion.
> His foes are so enrooted with his friends
> That plucking to unfix an enemy,
> He doth unfasten so and shake a friend. (4.1.203–7)

Whereas Mowbray fears that indiscriminate royal retaliation will uproot them even if they mean to remain loyal, the Archbishop trusts that the King will heed the Gospel's warning, 'lest while ye go about to gather the tares, ye plucke vp also with them the wheat' (Matt. 13.29). Scrope thus argues that precisely because of this difficulty of distinguishing between wheat and tares, that is, traitors and loyal subjects, the King will refrain from settling all his scores.

With his reference to the Biblical parable of the wheat and the tares, Archbishop Scrope might be said to secularise a prominent ecclesiological argument for tolerating hypocrisy. Heinrich Bullinger, for instance,

[73] Daniel, *Civile Wars* 4.78.

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deduces the imperative not to weed out hypocrites from the *ecclesia visibilis* in his sermon 'Of the holie Catholique Church' from the same proof text: 'We saie that the wicked or hypocrites, be in like sorte in the Church, as chaffe is in the corne', which God nonetheless 'forbiddeth to bee plucked vp, least that therewith the corne be plucked vp also'. Hence, they are to be 'suffered, least some woorse mischief happen to the whole bodie of the Church'.[74] Richard Hooker too recommends tolerating hypocrisy with reference to 'those parables which our Savior in the gospel hath concerning mixture of vice with virtue, light with darknes, truth with error'.[75]

Shakespeare's play reiterates in a political register Bullinger's and Hooker's concern that being excessively precise about hypocrisy might lead to 'some worse mischief' than accepting the intermixture of wheat and tares. Thus, Archbishop Scrope builds his case for abandoning armed conflict in favour of negotiations on the hope that the Lancastrians will wisely refrain from a general purge. Notably, Peter Lake points out that the rebels' serious consideration of negotiations, both in Shrewsbury and at Gaultree, suggests that they never meant to dislodge Henry IV in the first place.[76] The talk of Richard's deposition only begins to swell in part 2, when the stakes are raised after their initial defeat.[77] The rebels' political radicalism thus stands in a proportionate relationship to the Lancastrians' reassertion of political dominance.

Judging by the *Henry IV* plays, the New Historicist dictum that power produces its own subversion is perhaps better understood in a less totalitarian and more literal sense than its Foucauldian roots intimate. The economic exercise of power advocated by *politiques* may offer a more suitable point of reference for Shakespeare's analysis of power politics: 'the lesse the power of the soueraigntie is', Bodin observes, 'the more it is assured'.[78] Notably, Bodin applies the same logic to the question of toleration when he argues that harsh measures of persecution will not simply uproot religious dissenters for good but rather reduce them to such desperate straits that they will 'tread also

[74] Bullinger, *Decades* 818.

[75] Hooker 2:352. For the parable of the tares as an argument for tolerating hypocrisy, see also Hooker 1:199. For the central place of Bullinger's *Decades* in English Protestantism, especially in the first half of Elizabeth's reign, when they clearly outshone Calvin's *Institutes*, see MacCulloch, *Later Reformation* 71; for the Augustinian roots of Bullinger's and Hooker's toleration for hypocrites (specifically those Nicodemites who denied Christ during the Diocletianic Persecution) on the grounds of Matt. 13, see Bainton 69–71.

[76] Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics* 296.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Bodin, *Of the lawes and cvstomes [République]* 517.

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vnder foot both the lawes and magistrats, and so inure themselues to all kinds of impieties and villanies, such as is impossible by mans lawes to be redressed'.[79] In contrast, restraint can serve to defuse conflict, as is also suggested when Scrope persuades his fellow-rebels to abandon resistance and argues for a peaceful settlement with the Lancanstrians because he believes that they will exercise restraint in weeding out the tares. Like Bodin, Shakespeare seems to suggest that the deliberate self-restriction of one's claim to power might be employed as a technology of power that is not simply a renunciation of authority but rather serves to consolidate authority against the challenge of religio-political dissent in the long run.

The Lancastrians, however, are too short-sighted to see that. Instead, they follow Machiavelli's precept in *The Prince* that an enemy should be crushed for good if the occasion offers itself and that any means, even perjury, are legitimate in the process.[80] With their equivocating promise of a pardon, Prince John and Westmoreland want to have it both ways, that is, to avoid a military confrontation but also to finish off the rebels for good. However, while this trick can be pulled off only once, rebellion is a hydra. As Hastings prophesies to Prince John, even before his perjury, 'success of mischief shall be born, / And heir from heir shall hold this quarrel up / Whiles England shall have generation' (4.1.273–5). And next time, nobody will be so foolish as to trust the Lancastrians' word.[81]

As I have argued in this chapter, Shakespeare's transformation of the Lollard martyr John Oldcastle into the cowardly Falstaff has both political and theatrical significance. Shakespeare's portrayal of the Scrope rebellion expresses a deep distrust in martyrdom, its politically subversive nature, and the possibility of instrumentalising the rhetoric of martyrdom for ulterior purposes. Hence, the parodic traits in his continuous contrast between Oldcastle's martyrdom and Falstaff's habits of lying and dissimulation are hardly as malevolent as they have often been assumed to be. On the contrary, Falstaff is free from the taint of treason, which had made Oldcastle such a problematic figure for the sixteenth century. Even as a stage Puritan who habitually resorts to lying and dissimulation, Falstaff is a remarkably benevolent figure and lacks, especially in *1 Henry IV*, the more sinister traits of his Marlovian and Jonsonian equivalents, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapters 6 and 7. Rather than distantiating

[79] Ibid. 539C. [80] Compare with Machiavelli, *Prince*, chs. 3 and 18.
[81] As McAlindon has shown in 'Swearing and Forswearing', perjury lies at the root of the process of political, social, and moral disintegration which Shakespeare portrays in his account of the War of the Roses.

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the theatre from Falstaff's lies, Shakespeare puts a formidable justification of dissimulation into Falstaff's mouth, which also amounts to a defence of the theatre. Shakespeare thus aligns outward conformity with theatricality. However, such a whole-hearted endorsement of outward conformity was by no means the rule on the early modern stage, as I will show in the following chapters.

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CHAPTER 3

# *Falstaff Revisited*
## *Puritan Nonconformity and Loyal Dissent in* 1 Sir John Oldcastle

As suggested in Chapter 2, Shakespeare rewrote the proto-Protestant martyr John Oldcastle in the person of Falstaff in his *Henry IV* plays as an apologist of dissimulation, in the spheres of both religion and the theatre. However, this reinterpretation of the Lollard dissenter, who had originally given Falstaff his name, did not remain uncontested. *The First Part of Sir John Oldcastle* (1599), written by Anthony Munday, Michael Drayton, Robert Wilson, and Richard Hathaway, presented itself as a deliberate repudiation of Shakespeare's take on Oldcastle/Falstaff.[1] As I argue in this chapter, *Olcastle* makes a subtle case for nonconformity and can be read as a protest against the silencing of Puritan dissent in the 1590s, which stands in marked contrast to the religio-political quietism displayed in the *Henry IV* plays. Already in the prologue, the authors of *Oldcastle* set the record straight:

> It is no pampered glutton we present,
> Nor agèd counsellor to youthful sins;
> But one whose virtue shone above the rest,
> A valiant martyr and a virtuous peer. (prol. 6–9)

While Shakespeare's plot in the *Henry IV* plays is substantially indebted to *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth* (published in 1598) and follows its dramatic predecessor in largely passing over Olcastle's religious dissent and subsequent martyrdom, *Oldcastle* follows the historical record, especially John Foxe's *Actes and Monuments*, more closely.

[1] I cite from Munday, Drayton, Wilson, and Hathaway, 'Sir John Oldcastle, Part 1', in *The Oldcastle Controversy*, eds. Peter Corbin and Douglas Sedge, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991, 12–144. For some careful speculation about the division of labour among the collaborators, see Jonathan Rittenhouse's edition of the play (Rittenhouse 50–65). The second part of the play, entered in the Stationers' Register on 11 August 1600 as 'the second and last parte of the history of Sir / IOHN OLDCASTELL lord COBHAM with his martyrdom' (Rittenhouse 1), has not survived. Part 1 was first printed in 1600, without authorial attribution, by Valentine Simmes for Thomas Pavier. The second quarto from 1619 (with a false imprint dated 1600), one of the notorious Pavier quartos, falsely ascribes the play to Shakespeare.



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The play (partly) adopts Foxe's narrative that clears Oldcastle from the charge of treason and presents the prospective martyr as a worthy precursor of the English Reformation. Throughout the play, however, Oldcastle is subject to slander by corrupt ecclesiastical detractors, especially the Bishop of Rochester and the comically villainous priest Sir John of Wrotham, who accuse him not only of heresy but also of treason. Against his will, Oldcastle's name becomes a rallying cry for all kinds of malcontents, who eventually march against the King in what came to be known as the Ficket Field rebellion. Even Henry V, who is otherwise reluctant to blame Oldcastle personally for any civic unrest related to the Lollard cause, begins to doubt Oldcastle's loyalty. However, the latter succeeds in reasserting his credentials as a loyal subject when he reveals the Southampton Plot (dramatised by Shakespeare in *Henry V*, but without Oldcastle) to the King. As Henry departs for France, Rochester continues his campaign against Oldcastle, who is eventually imprisoned in the Tower but escapes with the help of his loyal servant Harpool and is reunited with his wife. For the remainder of *The First Part of Sir John Oldcastle*, the couple are on the run, facing new difficulties such as being falsely accused of murder, but in the end they manage to flee to Wales. Oldcastle's martyrdom would evidently have been reserved for the non-extant sequel.

In this version of the Oldcastle narrative, Munday and his collaborators roll back almost all of Shakespeare's innovations. Falstaff's 'good fellowship' is derided as nothing but the deluded self-conception of a shabby band of thieves. Shakespeare's celebration of dissimulation as a life-giving principle is replaced with conventional anti-theatrical stereotypes and denunciations of Catholic hypocrisy. Unlike Falstaff, Oldcastle is a Protestant hero willing to undergo martyrdom, but nonetheless not a traitor. In the top-down perspective on toleration in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays, toleration for private dissent and the stress on political obedience go hand in hand. In turn, *Oldcastle* addresses the subject of religious dissent from what might be called an oppositional perspective. While Shakespeare denounces religious justifications of political resistance as a hypocritical instrumentalisation of religion, *Oldcastle* dramatises the case of religious dissenters who think of themselves as loyal subjects but find themselves accused of treasonous intentions because of their religious beliefs.

There are several political, religious, and literary contexts in which *Oldcastle* might plausibly be located. The play's explicit repudiation of Shakespeare's lampooning of the proto-Protestant martyr may have been related to the rivalry between the Chamberlain's Men and the Admiral's Men, as well as the different court factions to which their respective patrons

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adhered. The Admiral's Men's patron, Charles Howard, was allied to the Elizabethan Lord Cobham, William Brooke, and his son Henry, who possibly took offence at Shakespeare's take on their venerable ancestor.[2] Donna Hamilton has further suggested that the publication of *Oldcastle* and the Earl of Huntingdon plays may be related to the controversy which the Puritan exorcist John Darrell stirred up around the turn of the century. The plays may thus have met a renewed demand to assert the credentials of a moderate and loyalist Puritan party.[3] This ideological stance may also have been related to commercial considerations. Michael O'Connell has suggested that 'what the Henslowe companies appear to have had in mind was the conciliation of moderate Puritan elements among the London citizens and an attempt to entice into the theaters those groups that had previously shunned it'.[4]

As an appeal to a devout Protestant or even Puritan audience, *Oldcastle* did not stand alone. In terms of genre, *Oldcastle* belongs to a brief vogue of hagiographical plays remembering the heroes and martyrs of the English Reformation, which were staged primarily by the Admiral's Men and Worcester's Men from 1599 to c. 1605. Plays such as *Oldcastle*, *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, and *Sir Thomas Wyatt* have been classified as 'elect nation plays', but usually come with a strong biographical bent and a focus on individual choice, moral dilemma, and conscience, which would likely have resonated with those who found themselves estranged from the Established Church.[5] At any rate, with its generic affiliation to the elect nation play and by adapting a prominent character from the repertoire of the Chamberlain's Men, *Oldcastle* fits squarely into the Admiral's Men's commercial strategies of 'cluster marketing and character spin-offs'.[6] That is to say, there are overlapping commercial, ideological, as well as political considerations that might help to account for the remarkably Puritan slant of the play.

## Conscience and Loyalty

While the rebels in *2 Henry IV* freely admit that they are using religion as a propaganda tool, *Oldcastle* repeatedly stresses the need to differentiate between religious dissent and treason. In the 1590s, the nexus of heresy and

[2] For the possibility that *Oldcastle* may have been commissioned by the Cobham faction, perhaps even by the Lord Admiral himself, see White, 'Shakespeare, the Cobhams' 87; Gurr, 'Privy Councilors' 242–3. The role of court factionalism in the genesis of *Oldcastle* has, however, been questioned more recently. See Kitzes 289–90.

[3] Hamilton, *Politics of Protestant England* 90–1. [4] O'Connell 113. [5] See Spikes.

[6] Gurnis 78.

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treason concerned Catholics as well as Puritans, who clashed more violently with political and ecclesiastical authority than they had ever done before. The two separatists Henry Barrow and John Greenwood were hanged on 6 April 1593, and John Penry, a possible co-author of the Marprelate tracts, shared their fate six weeks later. The most spectacular case, however, was the self-proclaimed prophet William Hacket, who declared on 12 July 1591 in Cheapside that the Queen had forfeited her right to the Crown because of her suppression of true religion.[7] Hacket was a major embarrassment for the Puritan cause, but provided conformist polemicists with exactly what they had been looking for: a link between Presbyterianism and open rebellion. Anti-Puritan legislation followed suit. In 1593, Parliament passed the notorious Act against Seditious Sectaries,[8] 'the first and only act of an Elizabethan parliament which dealt exclusively and severely, with protestant sectaries'.[9] In subsequent popular polemics and satire, Puritanism became synonymous with sedition. In Thomas Nashe's *Unfortunate Traveller* (1594), for instance, the infamous Anabaptist uprising in Munster in 1534–5 serves as a blueprint for Puritan sedition: 'What was the foundation or groundworke of this dismall declining of Munster, but the banishing of their Bishop? . . . Heare what it is to be Anabaptists, to be Puritans, to be villaines; you may bee counted illuminate botchers for a while, but your end will bee, Good people, pray for vs'.[10] The rejection of the episcopacy, Nashe intimates, was only the tip of the iceberg of Puritan sedition.

As a means to assert their credentials as good subjects to the English monarch, Catholics were also happy to put the boot in. In *A treatise of three conuersions* (1604), Robert Parsons calls Oldcastle 'a fanaticall Anabaptist' and describes him as a model for rebellious Puritans like Hacket: 'Hackett said, he should rise againe the third day, as Oldcastle did: and went as deuoutly to the gallowes, as the other did . . . and at the gallowes railed no lesse bitterly vpon Queene Elizabeth, then Oldcastle did vpon that woorthie King Henry the fift [*sic*]'.[11] Such attempts to discredit the Puritan movement as seditious *in toto* by drawing a line from Oldcastle to the most radical Puritans of the 1590s are also registered in

[7] For Hacket, see Walsham, '"Frantick Hacket"'. For a survey of the key texts of the debate, see Milward 99–104.
[8] 35 Eliz. c. 1. [9] Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* 431.
[10] Nashe 2:238, 241. On the use of the Anabaptist comparison in Elizabethan anti-Puritanism, see Black, 'Rhetoric of Reaction'.
[11] Parsons, *Three conuersions* 2Q6r.

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*Oldcastle*. In the play, Catholic villains such as the Bishop of Rochester ventriloquise the same allegations of sedition against the Lollards as were levelled against the Puritans in the 1590s:

> . . . When, like a frenzy,
> This innovation shall possess their minds,
> These upstarts will have followers to uphold
> Their damned opinion more than Harry shall
> To undergo his quarrel 'gainst the French. (2.13–17)

The threat of popular revolt, their addiction to 'innovation', and their 'frenzy' are all reminiscent of the anti-Puritan stereotypes of the 1590s. However, it is this assumption of the inherent seditiousness of Puritanism that *Oldcastle* purports to challenge and unmask as a polemical fiction.

From the beginning, the play is intensely concerned with the relationship between religious dissent and treason. The prologue proclaims the 'true faith and loyalty' (10) of this 'valiant martyr' (9) '[t]o his true sovereign and his countrey's weal' (11). The play's villains, however, continuously associate his heresy with treason and thereby suggest that religious dissent is *ipso facto* seditious. Early on, the anti-Lollard Lord Herbert sets the scene when he proclaims that 'they were traitors all / that would maintain [Lollardy]' (1.90–1). The play thus strikes a very Foxean note. As the martyrologist points out in his discussion of Oldcastle, already the martyrs of the primitive Church 'were wrongfully accused of the Gentiles for insurrections & rebellions against the Emperours and Empire',[12] and this is also the charge against which Foxe defends Oldcastle.

Ever since Mary Grace Muse Adkins' article on 'Sixteenth-Century Religious and Political Implications in *Sir John Oldcastle*' (1942), it has been a critical commonplace that the play addresses the plight of sixteenth-century Puritans. As its deliberate anachronisms and references to sixteenth-century religious culture suggest, the fate of Oldcastle is indeed not without contemporary relevance.[13] Later critics have further argued that the play distinguishes between a radical, supposedly seditious form of Puritanism and

[12] Foxe, *Acts and Monuments Online* 571.

[13] The Bishop of Rochester, for instance, anachronistically reports that the Lollards 'give themselves the name of Protestants' (2.20). Harpool's insistence that he is 'neither heretic nor puritan, but of the old church' (13.129–30) is an even more glaring anachronism. Finally, Oldcastle's reading materials are firmly rooted in the sixteenth century (13.145–8), including highly popular Protestant literature such as the anonymously published *Treasure of Gladness* (1563) or Thomas Becon's *The Sick Man's Salve* (1558), which Quicksilver in *Eastward Ho*, for instance, is able to recite by heart in his demonstration of repentance (5.2.42–3).

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a moderate, politically loyal form of Puritanism.[14] Significantly, *Oldcastle* follows Foxe in exonerating its protagonist from the charge of treason, but does not reproduce the martyrologist's claim that the Ficket Field rebels, who allegedly rose up in Oldcastle's name, 'c[a]me out of Outopia, where belike this figment was first forged, and inuented'.[15] In *Oldcastle*, the rebels embody an all too real alternative to Oldcastle's loyal dissent and are marked by their abuse of the rhetoric of conscience. The priest Beverley protests that '[w]e meant no hurt unto your Majesty, / But reformation of religion' (12.15–16), and the rebel leader Roger Acton tells the King that 'my conscience urged me to it' (12.9). The rich Dunstable brewer Murley even brushes aside any concerns about the legitimacy of regicide by declaring that '[w]e come to fight for our conscience and for honour' (8.34–5), although his motivation is clearly the prospect of knighthood, with which Acton lures him to join the rebellion. King Henry accordingly rejects conscience as a shallow excuse for disobedience in his confrontation with Acton:

> Thy conscience? Then thy conscience is corrupt,
> For in thy conscience thou art bound to us,
> And in thy conscience thou shouldst love thy country;
> Else what's the difference 'twixt a Christian
> And the uncivil manners of the Turk? (12.10–14)

Henry must have in mind Paul's injunction to obey the secular magistrate in Romans 13:5: 'Wherefore ye must be subiect, not because of wrath onely, but also for conscience sake'. Unlike the rebels, the play's protagonist has understood that conscience may justify religious dissent, but not political rebellion:

> One solace find I settled in my soul:
> That I am free from treason's very thought.
> Only my conscience for the Gospel's sake
> Is cause of all the troubles I sustain. (13.93–6)

By distinguishing between rebellious radicals and the politically loyal protagonist, *Oldcastle* apparently confirms Marsha Robinson's observation that the 'elect nation' plays 'both celebrate conscience and struggle to contain its anarchical, individuating impulses that threaten a Protestant consensus'.[16] However, the commonly asserted distinction between

[14] See Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* 256–9; OCCS 16; Lake, 'Politics of Conscience' 165–7; Lake, *How Shakespeare Put Politics* 422–8; Gurnis-Farrell 189–90.
[15] Foxe, *Acts and Monuments Online* 573. [16] Robinson, *Writing the Reformation* 77.

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moderate and loyalist Puritans on the one hand and an extreme, revolutionary wing on the other is a problematic heuristic because the distinction between religious dissent and treason was in itself subject to controversy in the late sixteenth century. It was by no means clear, even fundamentally contested, to what extent religious dissent could be accommodated within a framework of political loyalty and at what point it turned into treason by virtue of its disregard for the monarch's ecclesiastical authority as supreme governor of the church. Hence, the distinction between moderates and radicals does not simply describe an ideological conflict; it also reproduces an already highly charged interpretation of it.[17] One question that was particularly pressing for Puritans in the 1590s was whether loyalty entailed nothing but obedience to the monarch's secular commands or whether it also required the acknowledgement of the monarch's supremacy over the Church and conformity to the Elizabethan settlement. This political precariousness of Puritan dissent is also reflected in *Oldcastle*, which complicates any clear-cut distinction between moderate and radical dissent and puts a spotlight on the fraught relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authority in early modern England.

When King Henry and Oldcastle eventually discuss the Lollard problem, the King formulates what might be characterised as a *politique* or conformist religious policy that delimits secular authority in religious matters according to a distinction between private and public religion:

> We would be loath to press our subjects' bodies,
> Much less their souls, the dear redeemèd part
> Of Him that is the ruler of us all;
> Yet let me counsel ye that might command:
> Do not presume to tempt them with ill words,
> Nor suffer any meetings to be had
> Within your house but, to the uttermost,
> Disperse the flocks of this new gathering sect. (6.19–26)

In other words, Henry urges Oldcastle to conform to the established religion. Oldcastle's 'heretical' views are tolerable as long as they do not manifest themselves in any public form.[18] However, the play problematises

[17] For an important methodological caveat to the same effect, although in a different context, see Lake and Questier, 'Puritans, Papists'.

[18] For such an interpretation of the play's ideological stance, see Bevington 258; Lake, 'Politics of Conscience' 161–2.

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such a neat pairing of conscience and private faith on the one hand and political allegiance and public action on the other and thus veers dangerously close to the breakdown of Henry's policy of outward conformity. When the rebel leader Acton falsely claims that Oldcastle supported their cause, even the King, for a moment, loses faith in Oldcastle and starts to distrust merely outward obedience:

> I think the iron age begins but now,
> Which learnèd poets have so often taught,
> Wherein there is no credit to be given
> To either words, or looks, or solemn oaths;
> For if there were, how often hath he [i.e. Oldcastle] sworn,
> How gently tuned the music of his tongue,
> And with what amiable face beheld he me,
> When all, God knows, was but hypocrisy. (12.74–81)

As soon as Oldcastle's dissent becomes tainted with the charge of treason, the distinction between inwardness and outwardness no longer serves to demarcate a sphere of legitimate private dissent from the reach of royal authority. Instead, this disjunction is re-conceptualised as suspicious hypocrisy and a dangerous cloak for treasonous intents. For religious dissenters, the iron age of distrust and suspicion was an iron age of persecution. Henry's concerns thus chime in with a political trend towards increasing intolerance and distrust in outward conformity in the 1580s and 1590s, which I will describe in more detail in Chapter 4. However, when Acton admits that 'we have no other ground / But only rumour to accuse this lord' (12.113–14), Henry steps back from the brink and acknowledges Oldcastle's loyalty. Placing such trust in the loyalty of dissenters would have been unusual in an Elizabethan context. In fact, the King's refusal to succumb to anti-heretical paranoia embodies an ideal of kingship that was rather wishful thinking than reality in the late sixteenth century and that would have reflected unfavourably on the period's increasingly harsh measures of persecution.

## Oldcastle's Nonconformity

In *Oldcastle*, the *politique* distinction between inward dissent and outward obedience is problematised not only by distrust and fear of treason but also by the protagonist's own behaviour. As it turns out, it is not so much Henry who violates the policy of outward conformity as Oldcastle himself, who cannot content himself with playing the Nicodemite. Throughout the play, Oldcastle denies treasonous intentions, but he

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never denies the nonconformist stance imputed to him by his enemies. Suffolk, for instance, says early on that Oldcastle 'will not be compelled to come to mass' (2.109). Attendance at the Mass was indeed the main target of Calvin's anti-Nicodemite campaign and marked the touchstone of the true Christian's duty to avoid idolatry in Catholic territories.[19] As Calvin further argues in one of the sermons published by Munday, 'we are not taught of God, onelye for our selues, but that euery man, after the measure of his faith, should brotherly communicate, with his neighbours, and distribut vnto them, that thing he hath learned, and knowen in Gods schole'.[20] That is to say, Henry's conformist programme clashes with the duty of the godly to proselytise. As the Bishop of Rochester points out, Oldcastle has apparently been doing just that:

> Grievous complaints have passed between the lips
> Of envious persons to upbraid the clergy,
> Some carping at the livings which we have,
> And others spurning at the ceremonies
> That are of ancient custom in the Church,
> Amongst the which Lord Cobham is a chief. (2.5–10)

Oldcastle's supposed 'spurning at the ceremonies' would presumably have resonated with Puritan complaints about clerical vestments or the form in which the sacraments were administered, such as the making of the sign of the cross in the Baptismal rite or kneeling when receiving the communion.

When the King urges Oldcastle not 'to suffer any meetings to be had / Within your house', he likewise suggests that Oldcastle, who does not deny having done so, was indeed actively supporting the Lollard cause. Importantly, even though Henry frames his admonition as advice at this point – 'let me counsel ye that might command' (6.22) – Oldcastle has indeed violated previous royal commands not to hold Lollard meetings. As one of the judges proclaims in the first scene of the play, the King's command was that

[19] As Calvin puts it in one of the sermons published by Munday in 1584, 'the Masse is cheefe' among 'certaine kindes of Idolatries, which are of most estimation in these dayes'. According to Calvin, 'nothing can be imagined more fowle and wicked' (F2r) because in its Catholic understanding as a sacrifice, it 'is a denial of Jesus Christes death, and a certaine Sacriledge inuented and ordeined by Sathan, to abolishe the Sacrament of the Supper' (*Two godly and learned Sermons* F2r-v).

[20] Ibid. D7v–D8r.

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> There be no meetings; when the vulgar sort
> Sit on their ale-bench with cups and cans,
> Matters of state be not their common talk,
> Nor pure religion by their lips profaned. (1.120–3)

Henry's command resonates with medieval as well as with Elizabethan legislation of religious dissent. As for Henry's command that '[t]here be no meetings', it is not entirely clear whether *Oldcastle* is drawing on historical legislation and, if so, what laws exactly.[21] At any rate, Foxe is quite clear that there *was* legislation that penalised conventicles in the sharpest terms. Foxe does not deny that Acton and his associates were executed for treason, even if they had no seditious intents, perhaps because they 'did frequent among themselues, some conuenticles (which conuenticles was made treason by the statute aforesayd) either in those Thickets or in some place els'.[22] The play similarly acknowledges that even Oldcastle's supposedly loyalist nonconformity stands in contradiction with not just the ambitions of the corrupt clergy but also the direct will of the King. When Henry eventually tells Oldcastle that 'for some good service you have done, / We for our part are pleased to pardon you' (6.4–5), there is indeed something to be pardoned. It seems highly questionable, therefore, whether Oldcastle really embodies the perfect loyalty of a supposedly moderate Puritan that is usually ascribed to him.

Moreover, Oldcastle's activities would also have been in breach of a recent and important sixteenth-century piece of legislation, namely, the 1593 Act against Seditious Sectaries mentioned earlier in this chapter. The act required nonconformists 'to yeald themselves to come to some Churche Chappell or usuall Place of Commen Prayer, and heare Devyne Service, accordinge to her Majesties Lawes and Statutes'.[23] Admittedly, Oldcastle's refusal 'to come to mass' (2.109) does not necessarily mean that he categorically stays away from church services. Absenting oneself from the service during the communion was a widespread Elizabethan practice.[24] However,

[21] In his edition of the play, Rittenhouse suggests (108–9, 113) that the command may be based on a statute passed one year after the Ficket Field rebellion (2 Hen. V c. 7), which is fully quoted and discussed at length by Foxe (*Acts and Monuments Online* 570–4).

[22] Foxe, *Acts and Monuments Online* 587.

[23] SR 4–2:841.

[24] Skipping merely the Lord's Supper was a common form of Catholic semi-conformity, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 7. According to Calvin, however, there seems to have been a Protestant equivalent in Catholic territories. In the anti-Nicodemite sermons published by Munday, Calvin describes a similarly selective church attendance on the part of French Protestants: 'Other some do watche a tyme, least they come in the Masse whyle, and yet they come to the Temple, that men should suppose they heare Masse' (*Two godly and learned Sermons* G1r).

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the 1593 act incriminates not only Protestants who 'abstayne from commynge to Churche to heare Devyne Service' but also those who refuse 'to receyve the Communyon'.[25] Like Henry's command in *Oldcastle*, the act further penalises 'unlaufull Assemblies Conventicles or Meetinges uuder [*sic*] colour or pretence of any exercise of Religion'.[26] Oldcastle, who refuses to go to Mass and apparently promotes Lollard conventicles of some sort, clearly does not comply with secular authority in the fullest sense – neither in the legal framework of the play's historical context nor according to the standard of Elizabethan legislation of religious dissent. Oldcastle's nonconformity thus complicates the play's discourses of conscience and political loyalty to an extent that has not yet been fully recognised in previous criticism.

The controversial status of Oldcastle's loyalty is most glaring in the question of royal supremacy. Of course, Puritans rejected Papal authority, but they did not really warm to royal supremacy either. *The Book of Discipline*, the Puritan blueprint for an ecclesiastical constitution, provided no role at all for the monarch, as Richard Bancroft observed in his scorching review of the document: 'there is not once mention made of any authoritie, or office, in or ouer the Church; belonging to the Christian ciuile magistsrate. He hath not so much, as eyther voyce or place, in any of their Synodes, as a member thereof'.[27] The 1593 Act against Seditious Sectaries accordingly penalised any claims 'to denye withstande and ympugne her Majestie Power and Authoritie in Causes Ecclesiasticall'.[28] When Oldcastle declares his loyalty to Henry, he complies at least with one aspect entailed by royal supremacy, namely, a vociferous denunciation of Papal authority. In his pious zeal, however, Oldcastle silently passes over the issue of the monarch's authority over the Church and begs the King that his 'conscience may not be encroached upon'.

> But for obedience to the Pope of Rome,
> I owe him none, nor shall his shaveling priests
> That are in England alter my belief.
> If out of Holy Scripture they can prove
> That I am in an error, I will yield,
> And gladly take instruction at their hands.
> But otherwise, I do beseech your Grace,
> My conscience may not be encroached upon. (6.11–18)

[25] SR 4–2:841. [26] Ibid.
[27] Bancroft, *Daungerous positions* 98. On *The Book of Discipline*, see also Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* 291–302.
[28] SR 4–2:841.

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The simple repudiation of Papal authority does not mean, as David Bevington has suggested, that 'Henry and Oldcastle are thus as one in their belief that the church must be subject to royal authority and reformed under the king's direction'.[29] Oldcastle's insistence that he will only yield '[i]f out of Holy Scripture they can prove / That I am in an error' is a fitting insistence on *sola scriptura* for a first-generation Reformation hero. In the context of the 1590s, however, when apologists of the Church of England made a case for the authority of the monarch to regulate so-called things indifferent, such as 'the ceremonies / That are of ancient custom in the Church' (2.8–9) which Oldcastle apparently spurns, he would rather have sounded like a radical nonconformist.

Oldcastle's conception of loyalty is thus hardly coterminous with the acknowledgement of royal supremacy but to be defined more narrowly as obedience to the monarch in all secular matters. Remarkably, Henry is quite open to such a conception of loyalty. When he counsels Oldcastle to abandon his nonconformity instead of commanding him to do so, Oldcastle replies in terms vague enough that if 'my life in any of these points / Deserves th'attainder of ignoble thoughts' (6.28–9), he would that 'even the utmost rigour may be shown' (6.31). The King, however, does not insist on a more explicit declaration of obedience or a confirmation of royal supremacy on Oldcastle's part. On the contrary, he seems to scale back his expectations to a conception of loyalty that does not require complete conformity: 'Let it suffice we know your loyalty' (6.32). To be clear, Henry *did* explicitly prohibit conventicles and other manifestations of nonconformity earlier in the play, and this prohibition had been justified with a reference to 'the King's prerogative' (1.99). In his interview with Oldcastle, however, Henry does not insist on his prerogative in matters of religion and thus allows, at least temporarily, for a reconciliation of nonconformity with political loyalty. It is indeed only in such an ad hoc form of religious toleration, driven by pragmatism and the monarch's individual disposition rather than by constitutional principle, that Elizabethan Puritans could realistically place their hopes.[30]

[29] Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* 257.

[30] Throughout Elizabeth's reign, uniformity was enforced to different degrees in different places at different times. Lancashire, for instance, was simply passed over in Whitgift's subscription campaign in 1584. Similarly, Puritan exegetical exercises, so-called prophesyings, were mostly prohibited in the south by 1576, but actively encouraged in the diocese of Chester in order to counter the strong local Catholic presence with a well-trained, thoroughly reformed clergy (Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* 406).

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Finally, the play advances an interpretation of what exactly would constitute a violation of royal supremacy in words that, once again, are attuned to Puritan concerns in the 1590s. When Beverley defends himself after the failed rebellion by claiming that '[w]e meant no hurt unto your Majesty, / But reformation of religion' (12.15–16), Henry replies:

> Reform religion? Was it that ye sought?
> I pray who gave you that authority?
> Belike then, we do hold the sceptre up
> And sit within the throne but for a cipher.
> Time was, good subjects would make known their grief,
> And pray amendment, not enforce the same,
> Unless their king were tyrant, which I hope
> You cannot justly say that Harry is. (12.17–24)

This passage is arguably Henry's most determined bid for royal supremacy. The Elizabethan Act of Supremacy[31] authorised the monarch 'to visite refourme redres order correcte and amende all such Erroures Heresies Scismes Abuses Offences Contemptes and Enormitees whatsoever ... to the Pleasure of Almightye God thencrease of Vertue and the Conservac[i]on of the Peace and Unitie of this Realme'[32] – a clause that was also cited by opponents of Puritan reform initiatives in Parliament.[33] At first glance, Henry seems to stake out a similarly exclusive claim to reforming religion, just as his earlier suppression of conventicles appealed to his 'prerogative', a term that likely reminded the play's audiences of Elizabeth's governorship over the Church.[34]

However, Henry also makes an important distinction between mere petitions and active efforts to reform religion. In this regard, the scene can also be read as a retrospective vindication of Presbyterian agitation, which had led to the high-profile Star Chamber trial of nine Puritan ministers in 1591.[35] The ministers were accused of intending to set *The Book of Discipline* into practice without royal or episcopal authorisation, which would have constituted a violation of royal supremacy. However, they disavowed any intention of doing so and argued that the book was merely a proposal for

[31] 1 Eliz. c. 1. [32] SR 4–1:352. [33] *Proceedings* 2:354.

[34] Compare with the language of article 37, 'Of the ciuill Magistrates', of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, which speaks of the 'prerogatiue whiche we see to haue ben geuen always to all godly Princes in holy Scriptures by God him selfe, that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiasticall or Temporall, and restraine with the ciuill sworde the stubberne and euyll doers' ('Articles of Religion' 408–9).

[35] For a detailed account of the trial, see Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* 403–31.

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reform. The Act for the Submission of the Clergy[36] had stipulated the repeal of all ecclesiastical laws that were 'muche prejudiciall to the Kyng's prerogatyve royall and repugn[a]nt to the lawes and statutes of this Realme'.[37] According to Robert Beale, whose argumentation was also adopted by other Presbyterians who had subscribed to *The Book of Discipline*, the failure of subsequent attempts to establish a new corpus of ecclesiastical law had placed the responsibility for its reformation on the whole commonwealth.[38] By submitting *The Book of Discipline* for consideration, the Presbyterians were therefore merely doing their duty as loyal subjects. Beale, however, conceded that any attempts to set the book into practice would indeed have been illegal.[39]

In *Oldcastle*, Henry seems to vindicate this argumentation when he insists that 'good subjects would make known their grief, / And pray amendment, not enforce the same'. This is by no means a commonplace assertion of royal authority. After all, the right to voice one's opinion on matters of religion was highly contested during Elizabeth's reign. As Patrick Collinson points out, 'Beale was claiming for an entirely unprivileged group of private individuals powers which Elizabeth would not even concede to her own Parliament'.[40] Elizabeth was perfectly clear on this point when a parliamentary committee was established on 8 March 1587 in order to compose a petition for better training for the clergy and against Whitgift's harsh anti-Puritan proceedings. In her response, the Queen rejected even mere petitions as an infringement of her royal prerogative:

> Hir Majestie taketh your petition herein to be againste the prerogative of hir Croune. For by your full consentes it hathe bene confirmed and enacted (as the truth therein requireth) that the full power, authoritie, iurisdiccion and supremacie in Church causes which heretofore the Popes usurped, and tooke to them selves, shoulde be united and annexed to the imperiall Croune of this realme.[41]

As Elizabeth told Parliament through Lord Chancellor Hatton once more two years later, it had no right to 'meddle with anie such matters or causes of religion, excepte it be to bridle all those, whether papists or puritanes, which are therewithall discontented'.[42] Indeed, some of the more

[36] 25 Hen. VIII c. 19. [37] SR 3:460.
[38] Since Parliament failed to authorise the *Reformatio legum ecclesiasticarum* in 1553 and 1571, Roman canon law mostly remained in force, despite partial reform in 1571, 1575, 1585, 1597, and, most importantly, the canons from 1604. See *Synodalia* 1:111–329.
[39] See Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* 420–2; Levy, *Origins of the Fifth Amendment* 175–6.
[40] Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* 422. [41] *Proceedings* 2:364. [42] Ibid. 2:419–20.

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determined Puritan MPs, such as Peter Wentworth, Anthony Cope, James Morice, and others, were repeatedly arrested for their parliamentary speeches and initiatives.[43]

The bill that eventually resulted in the Act against Seditious Sectaries[44] likewise caused considerable unease in the Commons on 4 April 1593, especially because it stipulated a restriction of free speech that went far beyond the question of parliamentary privileges. The bill would have incriminated all who 'shall deface our devine service', even if only by 'open speaking'.[45] Since Beale and Morice had been placed under house arrest,[46] it fell to Nicholas Fuller and Henry Finch to lead the opposition. Fuller, who had already supported the nine Puritan ministers in the Star Chamber,[47] was alarmed by the prospect of being completely muzzled in matters of religion: 'Whosoever writeth or speaketh in these matters of controversy is within the danger of this law, for if he write or speake against any thinge that / is auctorised by law though he write not with a malitious intent against the Quene ... it shall be intended malitiously'.[48] Henry Finch, another common lawyer with Puritan sympathies, objected that '[t]o a man'[s] neerest frend it is not safe to speake; ffor though a men [*sic*] speake but against nonresidency, excommunication as it is used, or any other abuse in the Church, he incurrs the danger of this lawe'.[49] In none too subtle a gesture of intimidation, the separatists Herny Barrow and John Greenwood were hanged two days later, on 6 April. As one contemporary observed, 'it is playnley sayd ... that theyr execution proced[ed] of malice of the Bishopps to spite the nether house which hath provoked ther moch hatred among the common people affected that way'.[50] In the end, the bill was heavily amended by a committee of the Commons before it passed, but free speech in matters of religion was evidently a precarious good in late Elizabethan England.

In *Oldcastle*, Henry's liberal concession that good subjects may make known their grief thus tallies with a highly contested, Puritan interpretation of the right of subjects to partake in ecclesiastical deliberations.

[43] For Wentworth's pleas for free speech and repeated arrests, see, for example, *Proceedings* 2:320–31; 3:42–4, 3:68. For the debates on Anthony Cope's notorious bill to replace *The Book of Common Prayer*, see *Proceedings* 2:333–54. For the bills against abuses of ecclesiastical jurisdiction proposed by Morice and his subsequent arrest on 28 February 1593, see *Proceedings* 3:30–49, 3:76–80. For the suppression of Puritan parliamentary initiatives in general, see also Dean 98–132. However, for free speech as a specific feature of early modern parliamentary discourse and its often controversial restrictions, especially in matters of religion, see also Colclough 131–8; Mack 252–4.
[44] 35 Eliz. c. 1. [45] Quoted in Dean 68. [46] Levy, *Origins of the Fifth Amendment* 200–1.
[47] Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* 419. [48] *Proceedings* 3:162. [49] Ibid. 3:163.
[50] Quoted in Dean 70.

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However, it also rings rather hollow in the light of a long history of Puritan parliamentary initiatives that had come to nothing owing to the Queen's heavy-handed suppression of any challenge to her religious settlement. Henry ends on a politically highly charged note when he proclaims that subjects should 'not enforce [their grief] / Unless their king were tyrant which I hope / You cannot justly say that Harry is' (12.22–4). Henry's casual concession that resistance to a tyrant may actually be lawful is remarkable and flies in the face of Tudor orthodoxy. The contrast between Henry's own liberality and Elizabeth's usual parliamentary obstructionism could hardly have been missed by spectators with any interest in contemporary church politics. Even more, this contrast may have suggested that Elizabeth's suppression of free speech is actually an instance of the kind of tyranny that Henry disavows. If Henry is, at least in his treatment of religious dissent, an idealised monarch who validates the political views of a supposedly moderate and loyalist Puritan party, then the idea of moderate and loyalist Puritanism is really stretched to breaking point. Rather than celebrating the 'elect nation' or expressing allegiance to the Elizabethan settlement, *Oldcastle* ominously intimates that the patience of the silenced brethren is not without limits.

## Theatre, Hypocrisy, and Espionage

The nonconformist ethos of *Oldcastle* is also mirrored in its ambivalent attitude towards theatricality. As Marsha Robinson observes, the play 'disengages Falstaff, the consummate player of parts, from Oldcastle, the martyr, reincarnating an Oldcastle whose identity is fixed, rooted in inner "truth"'.[51] This ethical reorientation towards an inner truth to which the martyr testifies with his own blood leaves little leeway for a positive appraisal of dissimulation. However, Falstaff's hypocrisy resurfaces in the priest Sir John of Wrotham. Like Falstaff, who calls himself 'kind Jack Falstaff, true Jack Falstaff' (1H4 2.4.463), this priest calls himself 'kind Sir John of Wrotham, honest Jack' (2.149). However, whereas Shakespeare celebrates Falstaff's theatricality and makes a genuine case for dissimulation as a life-giving principle, the hypocritical Sir John is a good deal less charming than Falstaff – and also a good deal more reprehensible.

Sir John's theatricality has nothing to do with legitimate dissimulation as a means of self-preservation. His is the alleged hypocrisy of the Catholic clergy, which was habitually exposed in earlier polemical and didactic

[51] Robinson, *Writing the Reformation* 69.

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Protestant drama.[52] Sir John is thus arguably an embodiment of what Ritchie D. Kendall has called 'the stratagem of self-exorcism' of nonconformist drama,[53] the attempt to come to terms with the paradoxical formulation of a nonconformist ethos in a medium that relies on dissimulation. Thus, Oldcastle is stripped of Falstaff's habits of dissimulation, which in turn are transferred to and condemned in meta-theatrical fashion in the hypocritical priest, the martyr's theatrical double. In the play's first soliloquy, Sir John declares:

> I am not as the world does take me for.
> If ever wolf were clothed in sheep's coat,
> Then I am he. Old huddle and twang, i'faith;
> A priest in show, but in plain terms a thief.
> Yet let me tell you, too, an honest thief;
> One that will take it where it may be spared,
> And spend it freely in good fellowship.
> I have as many shapes as Proteus had
> That still, when any villainy is done,
> There may be none suspect it was Sir John. (2.154–63)

Sir John is a consummate shape-shifter, as is evident in this heterogeneous and contradictory patchwork of different theatrical traditions, which includes the morality Vice, the hypocritical stock priest of anti-Catholic drama, the ideal of good fellowship, and the Machiavellian dissembler. In brief, Sir John 'represents the self as a constructed artifice'.[54] Sir John's first costume, the sheep's clothing, recalls Christ's warning against false prophets, who 'come to you in shepes clothing, but inwardely they are rauening wolues' (Matt. 7:15). He adopts this role in his minor but nasty part in the machinations against Oldcastle when he maintains the façade of '[a]n honest country prelate who laments / To see such foul disorder in the Church' (2.30–1). This 'honest country prelate' is, as the play gradually reveals, a thief and nothing but 'a priest in show'. However, the play does not fail to point out that the priest shares his profession with 'that foul villainous guts, that led him to all that roguery . . . that Falstaff' (10.82–3). When Sir John robs the disguised King, the latter is indeed given to nostalgic reminiscing about his good old days, or rather nights, as a minion of the moon: 'Where the devil are all my old thieves that were wont to keep this walk? Falstaff, the villain, is so fat he cannot get on's horse; but methinks Poins and Peto should be

[52] See White, *Theatre and Reformation* 34–41; Kendall 101–22. [53] Ibid. 118.
[54] Robinson, *Writing the Reformation* 69.

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stirring hereabouts' (10.52–5). Sir John's rapacious tendencies are thus associated with one of the period's most popular stage characters, which might seem to palliate to some extent the anti-Catholicism that he embodies.

Additionally, Sir John insists that he is 'an honest thief; / One that will take it where it may be spared, / And spend it freely in good fellowship'. Sir John thus invokes Robin Hood, who had only recently been on stage in Munday's *Downfall of Robert Earl of Huntingdon* and *Death of Robert Earl of Huntingdon* (1598) and whose merry men are likewise repeatedly characterised as 'good fellows'.[55] In *Shakespeare's Tribe*, Jeffrey Knapp has argued that the ideal of good fellowship implies an inclusive, Erasmian stance towards religious difference.[56] Musa Gurnis-Farrell has accordingly suggested that by invoking good fellowship, *Oldcastle* 'generates an inclusive stage representation of English Catholicism', even though this may never have been the authors' intention.[57] As Gurnis-Farrell points out, '[t]he production of plays in the early modern commercial theater was a process of cultural bricolage. Playwrights used what tropes they had to hand to meet the market's demand for new plays that cashed in on current dramatic trends'.[58] Undoubtedly, Sir John is the result of such bricolage, which may well generate semantic effects beyond any individual author's intention or control. A case in point is the reconciliation between Sir John and Oldcastle's servant Harpool: 'Give me thy hand; thou art as good a fellow. I am a singer, a drinker, a bencher, a wencher. I can say a mass and kiss a lass' (4.182–3), to which Harpool replies: 'Well said, mad priest. We'll in and be friends' (4.186). However, such rogue ecumenicism is hardly commendable in the overall context of the play. For a start, Harpool's Protestant credentials are dubious.[59] And while Gurnis-Farrell claims that Sir John's good fellowship is a redeeming trait in an otherwise polemical satire of a Catholic priest, one might wonder if it is not rather the ideal of good fellowship that is tarnished by its association with Sir John and other unsavoury characters. In *Oldcastle*, the epithet 'good

[55] For example, *Downfall*, ll. 899–900, 923, 1113. However, Sir John's insistence that he is 'an honest thief' who spends his spoils 'freely in good fellowship' is a rather euphemistic description of the management of his finances. To the dismay of his concubine, he simply gambles his money away (16.5–6).

[56] See especially Knapp, ch. 1, 'Good Fellows' 23–57. [57] Gurnis-Farrell 190. [58] Ibid. 193.

[59] When Rochester accuses Harpool of 'contempt of our church discipline' (13.124) because of his rough handling of the sumner, Harpool replies: ''Sblood, my Lord Bishop, ye do me wrong. I am neither heretic nor puritan, but of the old church. I'll swear, drink ale, kiss a wench, go to mass, eat fish all Lent, and fast Fridays with cakes and wine, fruit and spicery, shrive me of my old sins afore Easter, and begin new afore Whitsuntide' (13.129–33). These words are, of course, rife with anti-Catholic stereotypes, but the play itself, rather than Harpool, seems to be doing the mocking, given that the latter does indeed behave accordingly for most of the play.

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fellow' is used in an inflationary and almost indiscriminate manner that severely questions its desirability. Although the term never entirely loses its positive evaluation of sociability, it also describes highly problematic behaviour, as when Sir John declares that 'a good fellow parson may have a chapel of ease [i.e. sexual gratification] where his parish church is far off' (4.16–17). When Sir John robs the disguised King, he calls himself again 'good fellow' and tells the King: 'if thou be a good fellow, play the good fellow's part; deliver thy purse without more ado' (10.42–3). Even more problematically, Acton calls one of his fellow-rebels 'good fellow' (8.51). In such moments, the play veers closely towards the scepticism that Puritans often displayed towards an undiscriminating ideal of good fellowship.[60] Any higher spiritual purpose in good fellowship, as well as any conception of the theatre in line with this ideal, is severely compromised in *Oldcastle.*

Finally, there is an almost Machiavellian element to Sir John's dissimulation. His revelation of a radical disparity between inward and outward self in an early soliloquy is typical for the stage Machiavel,[61] as is his boastful rhetoric and vocabulary when he proclaims that he has 'as many shapes as Proteus had / That still, when any villainy is done, / There may be none suspect it was Sir John' (2.161–3). In moments like this, Sir John sounds almost like Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who 'can add colours to the chameleon, / Change shapes with Proteus for advantages, / And set the murderous Machiavel to school' (3H6 3.2.191–3). Proteus and the chameleon are prominent early modern symbols of changeability, inconstancy, and deceit, which only rarely possess positive connotations outside Neoplatonic and Erasmian traditions. They also feature prominently in early modern anti-theatrical literature,[62] as for instance in *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters*, commonly ascribed to Munday: 'Plaiers can not better be compared than to the Camelion'.[63] An anti-theatrical flavour is indeed unmistakable in the characterisation of Sir John, given that he seems to own a well-stocked wardrobe of disguises that enable his illicit ventures. He is once described as 'a fellow with one eye that has robbed two clothiers' (4.94), a fitting target for his needs, and when he relieves the King of his gold, he is 'all in green' (11.99). The garb of a priest, it seems, is just one of Sir John's many costumes. Theatricality in *Oldcastle* thus is not associated with the accommodation of good fellowship but is rather a cloak for clerical

[60] Compare with Collinson, 'Cohabitation' 67.
[61] On the role of soliloquies by early modern stage Machiavels in connection to confessional polemics, see also Chapter 6.
[62] Barish 101–31. [63] Munday, *A second and third blast* 112; compare with Barish 101–31.

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abuses, especially the hypocrisy, exploitation, and persecutory practices ascribed to the Catholic clergy in Protestant polemics. Sir John thus embodies the 'strident histrionics' of the Foxean Catholic clergy, 'mere actors who play a false part', whose 'private thoughts are contained in Machiavellian moments of calculating shrewdness'.[64] It comes as no surprise then that the King has little tolerance for Sir John's dubious activities:

> . . . Why, you should be as salt
> To season others with good document;
> Your lives as lamps to give the people light;
> As shepherds, not as wolves to spoil the flock.
> Go hang him, Butler. (12.141–4)

Sir John talks his way out of even these dire straits with the bold move of pointing out that the King too once was one of Diana's foresters. Nonetheless, Henry's condemnation loses none of its moral urgency. In line with the anti-Catholic drama of earlier Protestant polemicists such as John Bale, the hypocritical theatricality of the clergy is to be exposed; the sheep's clothing must be torn off the ravening wolves.

However, such self-reflexive theatricality, which draws attention to the artificiality of its own representations, can also claim epistemological value for the institution of the theatre. With its meta-theatricality, the play constantly reminds its audiences not to trust outward appearances. As a form of dissimulation, the theatre is therefore paradoxically able to discover and expose its targets, in this case the alleged hypocrisy of the Catholic clergy (and, presumably, their spiritual heirs in the Church of England), whose behaviour is coded in such explicitly theatrical terms in the play. Such an approach to the theatre's epistemic status, which uncovers truth by means of theatrical falsehood, is embodied on the level of the plot by the protagonist's role as a spy in the Southampton Plot. Notably, the scene is unhistorical and has no known sources. It is a deliberate addition by the playwrights, quite possibly by Munday, and is therefore particularly revealing for the play's approach to dissimulation.[65] When the conspirators try to recruit Oldcastle, the latter initially plays along: 'Notorious treason! Yet I will conceal / My secret thoughts to sound the depth of it' (7.139). Surprisingly, Oldcastle immediately succeeds in persuading the remarkably daft conspirators to sign the

[64] Robinson, *Writing the Reformation* 60.

[65] In his edition of the play, Rittenhouse makes an informed guess that Munday is indeed responsible for scene 7, which dramatises Oldcastle's unhistorical infiltration of the Southampton Plot (63).

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document containing the plan and justification of the revolt (7.126–7, 167–76), which he carries immediately to the King. Oldcastle thus dissembles, paradoxically, in the service of the truth:

> How can they look his Highness in the face,
> Whom they so closely study to betray?
> But I'll not sleep until I make it known;
> This head shall not be burdened with such thoughts,
> Nor in this heart will I conceal a deed
> Of such impiety against my King. (7.190–5)

Oldcastle does not dissemble in order to conceal but in order to reveal treason. Just as the tradition of anti-Catholic drama invoked in the portrayal of Sir John claims to uncover hypocrisy, Oldcastle's dissimulation is committed to an ethos of exposure.

Kristin Bezio detects such a 'combination of spycraft and stagecraft' already in Munday's early career as a dramatist, especially in *Fedele and Fortunio* (1584). In this adaptation of Luigi Pasqualigo's *Il Fedele*, the combination of role-playing and espionage 'strongly parallels the situation occupied by Munday himself' when he claimed to have infiltrated Catholic communities abroad in order to spy on them.[66] In *Oldcastle*, the target of such histrionic spycraft is a form of radical proto-Protestantism that is presented as equally treasonous as the Jesuits. In fact, there is a remarkable parallel between Oldcastle's dissimulation in the play and the espionage which Munday practised not only against Catholics but also as a pursuivant in Archbishop Whitgift's campaign against the Puritan movement.[67] Munday's most notable victim was the Puritan preacher Giles Wigginton, who was suspected to be involved in the Marprelate tracts. On 6 December 1588, Munday visited Wigginton in his London lodgings with a commission to bring him to the Archbishop. On their journey to Lambeth, however, he feigned sympathy with Wigginton's claim that the prelates 'should not long endure, nor prosper at all'.[68] Munday managed to win the confidence of Wigginton, apparently as daft as the Southampton conspirators in *Oldcastle*, and got Wigginton to admit that he knew Martin's work well.[69]

[66] Bezio 477.

[67] Munday appears to have acted, at least occasionally, as a pursuivant from the 1580s up to the first decade of the seventeenth century. See Hamilton, *Munday and the Catholics* xxi–xxii.

[68] *Seconde Parte of a Register* 2:253.

[69] Ibid. The assumption of Wigginton's involvement in the Marprelate tracts, at least as a source, was certainly plausible. Martin had reported how Wigginton was deprived of his living in Sedbergh and recounted Wigginton's repeated conflicts with Whitgift, particularly his insolent omission of the Archbishop's academic and ecclesiastical titles (Marprelate, *Marprelate Tracts* 25–6). As Wigginton reveals elsewhere, Whitgift did not take this lack of reverence well at all: 'You called me of late Mr

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Munday's dissimulation against a supposed radical like Wigginton, who eventually fell in with 'Frantick Hacket'[70] and was accused of espousing populist resistance theory,[71] is echoed in the religious politics of *Oldcastle*. Despite its Puritan sympathies, the play likewise throws the Southampton conspirators and the radicals of the Ficket Field Rebellion, who share Wigginton's creed that they may take reform into their own hands, under the bus without the least scruples. Like Munday, the protagonist of *Oldcastle* acts as an agent provocateur in order to undermine the conspirators, whose endeavour may not be motivated by religion, but who are clearly willing to exploit religious discontent for their seditious purposes (7.135–8). This is not to say that Munday's work for Whitgift and *Oldcastle* are both expressions of a specific and stable, 'moderately Puritan' disposition on Munday's part. Munday's personal convictions throughout the 1580s and 1590s, if he had any, will likely remain a mystery. However, the parallels between Oldcastle's espionage and Munday's own work for Whitgift put a spotlight on the continuities between religious dissimulation and the theatre in the early modern period. As these parallels further accentuate, the play's ethos of exposure, which is exemplified by Oldcastle's espionage, did not only serve to expose Catholic hypocrisy but could also be put to the service of the suppression of Protestant dissenters. This ambiguity is equally evident in the play, which occupies an ideological position that could be construed as violating royal supremacy, but which nonetheless – or precisely for this reason – rests on the vociferous condemnation of a militant fringe. This, notably, was a common strategy employed by Puritans in order to assert their own supposed political probity.[72]

As I have argued in this chapter, *Oldcastle* can be read as a refutation of Shakespeare's take on the Lollard martyr in Falstaff in a number of ways. First of all, the authors of *Oldcastle* emphasise the nonconformist credentials of the Lollard to an extent that has been underestimated by previous critics. Even though the play goes to great lengths to

Whitgift. I wis I was Mr Doctor yet when you were but a skervye boye. If I be but Mr Whitgift what are you then I praye you, you must then be noebodye, or some suche like terme he used' (Wigginton, 'Examinations' 381).

[70] Walsham, '"Frantick Hacket"' 35–7. [71] Bancroft, *Daungerous positions* 168.

[72] Many Puritan divines of dubious political credentials themselves, including Cartwright, distanced themselves in unequivocal terms from the 'Martinists' (Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* 393) and William Hacket (Walsham, '"Frantick Hacket"' 32–4, 54–5). As Lake has shown, however, the strategy 'to oppose something called 'puritanism' (in reality a mere caricature of certain extreme elements in precisian opinion)' was indeed employed by patrons of the godly cause such as Bishop Matthew Hutton for the purpose of 'favouring, indeed protecting, the mass of puritan ministers' (Lake, 'Matthew Hutton' 197).

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emphasise the political loyalty of its protagonist, especially in the contrast with the Ficket Field Rebels and the Southampton conspirators, its political stance is more complicated. The play's condemnation of rebellion is not simply an unconditional declaration of obedience on the government's own terms. Just as the self-identification of a segment of the godly as moderate Puritans was often a strategic form of self-fashioning that cannot be taken at face value, *Oldcastle*'s ostensible condemnation of treason is primarily a rhetorical manoeuvre that serves to shift the coordinates of loyalty in favour of a more nuanced challenge to royal supremacy. Instead of cherishing *politique* tolerance for private dissent as Shakespeare arguably does with Falstaff, the play is critical of the silencing of religious dissent in the 1590s and suggests that an overbearing crackdown on religious dissent amounts to tyranny. Second, this nonconformist ethos also manifests itself in the play's highly ambivalent theatricality, embodied most prominently in its anti-Falstaff figure, Sir John of Wrotham. However, in a self-reflexive epistemology of discovery, the play also recalls earlier anti-Catholic drama that was dedicated to exposing hypocrisy by means of a meta-theatrical emphasis on the artificiality of its own representations. Finally, as Oldcastle's role as a spy suggests, this ethos of exposure could paradoxically be turned against dissenters themselves. As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 6, when the state renounced its reticence in making windows into men's hearts, it was often not the hypocrisy of the tyrannical clergy but that of seditious Puritans that was to be exposed as empty theatricality. The next two chapters, however, are dedicated to Catholic perspectives on religious dissent and the manner in which the aggressive inquiry into the secrets of English Catholics was reflected in Elizabethan and Jacobean drama.

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CHAPTER 4

# *Silence Denied*
## Sir Thomas More *and the Incrimination of Inward Dissent*

The play *Sir Thomas More* (c. 1593) revisits one of the first and most famous examples of the dilemma of treason and religious dissent in Protestant England, the fall from grace and treason trial of Thomas More in 1535.[1] *Sir Thomas More* chronicles More's rise to power, in which his shrewd pacification of the Evil May Day protests against foreigners in 1517 plays a prominent role, but also More's eventual downfall as a consequence of his passive resistance to Henry VIII's religious policies, which are portrayed, arguably with an eye to censorship, in a deliberately vague manner. The plot of *Sir Thomas More* thus addresses one of the burning questions of the day for Elizabethan Catholics, namely, whether it is possible to be a loyal subject of the English monarch while inwardly following one's conscience in matters of religion. With its portrayal of More's failure in this balancing act, the play gives voice to Catholic concerns in the late Elizabethan period that any distinction between conscience and treason, between inward dissent and outward obedience, might be practically unworkable in a climate of fear and persecution.

For the first time in Protestant England, More's martyrdom prominently pitted religious conscience against the charge of treason. As his fate made clear, Henry's claim to royal supremacy over the Church of England greatly complicated a neat distinction between spiritual and political allegiance. Even though More was convicted of treason, Elizabethan Catholics continued to insist that he 'dyed for mere matter of religion onelie'.[2] However, when English Catholics were absolved by Pope Pius V from their allegiance to the 'heretical' Queen of England, every Catholic became, by virtue of their spiritual allegiance to Rome, a potential traitor to England, and the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity was particularly unstable when religious dissent was associated with treason. In

[1] All references to the play are to the following edition: Anthony Munday, Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, and William Shakespeare, *Sir Thomas More*, eds. Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori, The Revels Plays, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990.

[2] Allen, *Modest defence* A5v.



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times of political crisis, as under the threat of a Spanish invasion, the government therefore resorted to espionage, torture, and the imposition of oaths in order to force suspects to reveal their inward convictions and their supposedly treasonable designs. The Catholic controversialist William Allen, for instance, denounces such aggressive intrusion into the inwardness of Catholics in his discussion of the 'bloody questions' that were posed to English Catholics concerning their political loyalties:

> Wherein if you say nothing, or refuse to answere somewhat in contempt or derogation of the sea Apostolique; then are you iudged no good subiect, but a traytor; whereby let al Princes and People Christian beare witnes of our miseries aud [*sic*] iniust afflictions; who are inforced to suffer death, for our onelie cogitations and inward opinions, vnduelie sought owt by force and feare.[3]

More's biography lent itself particularly well to a critique of this incrimination of secrecy and silence since More was convicted of treason even though he largely refrained from open protest against the ecclesiastical reforms of Henry VIII and his divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Just as More's silence did not save his neck, the play *Sir Thomas More* uses his fate in order to illustrate how the sanctuary of silence promised in Elizabeth's assurance that she would not make windows into men's hearts had been severely compromised by the 1590s.

David Bevington has argued that the political lessons of *Sir Thomas More* and *Oldcastle*, with their concern to separate religious dissent from treason, are 'virtually identical'.[4] However, there are considerable differences. Whereas *Oldcastle* can be read as a protest against the silencing of Puritan dissent, *Sir Thomas More* is rather the opposite, a protest against the obligation to reveal one's inward thoughts. In its insistent concern with silence, *Sir Thomas More* troubles the division between truth and lying by putting the intermediary category of secrecy centre stage. Secrecy is, as it were, an attempt to have it both ways, to hide the truth without lying. As such, it was a compromise that even the most intransigent opponents of Nicodemism could accept in some cases. Augustine concedes in *Against Lying* that it 'is not a lie when truth is passed over in silence'.[5] Aquinas remarks that to be 'silent about what is true' is 'a course sometimes permissible'.[6] Vermigli states that 'it is not alwaies required, that we should open whatsoeuer truth we doo knowe',[7] and even Calvin does not intend 'to driue euery man of necessitie, at all tymes, to giue a full and perfect

[3] Ibid. 62. [4] Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* 256. [5] Augustine, *Treatises* 152.
[6] Aquinas 2.2.110.1. [7] Vermigli 2.13.26.

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confession of theyr Faith, no, not sometymes when they be asked'.[8] It is such an economical approach to the truth that is dramatised in *Sir Thomas More*. However, the career of the fallen chancellor also confirms Bacon's warning in his essay 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation' that such a refusal to signify is always a precarious stance:

> For Men are too cunning, to suffer a Man, to keepe an indifferent carriage, betweene both, and to be *Secret*, without Swaying the Ballance, on either side. They will so beset a man with Questions, and draw him on, and picke it out of him, that without an absurd Silence, he must shew an Inclination, one way; Or if he doe not, they will gather as much by his Silence, as by his Speech.[9]

The pressure to declare oneself became particularly acute under the increasingly severe persecution of religious dissenters in late Elizabethan England. *Sir Thomas More* thus offers a very timely treatment of the ethics of silence and secrecy, the conditions under which they are possible or not, and the question of the point at which one is obligated to stand by the truth.

*Sir Thomas More* also revisits the question of resistance, which inevitably becomes pressing under a government that does not allow for private dissent. The play offers not only a portrayal of persecution but also an incisive analysis of the manner in which intolerance can precipitate crises of loyalty and legitimacy. Finally, in its portrayal of the failure of outward conformity, *Sir Thomas More* also abandons the alignment of theatricality with religious dissimulation. That is to say, I disagree with Jeffrey Knapp's claim that '*Sir Thomas More* equates conformity with theatricality'.[10] Even though the play can be read as a protracted apology of the theatre, the player More arguably comes into his own not as a conformist but in the performance of his martyrdom. First, however, a brief survey of how religious persecution intensified in the 1580s and 1590s will help to show how *Sir Thomas More* reflects the ways in which political and ecclesiastical institutions attempted to sound the inwardness of religious dissenters, and the theological, political, and legal debates that sprang from such practices.

## Making Windows into Men's Hearts

The late 1580s and 1590s saw the effective demolition of the Elizabethan Puritan movement and one of the most intense waves of persecution that English Catholics ever had to endure. Between 1586 and 1591, the period including the execution of Mary Stuart and the Spanish Armada, eighty-six

[8] Calvin, *Two godly and learned Sermons* Kiv. [9] OFB 15:21–2. [10] Knapp 152.

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Catholic martyrs were brought to the scaffold, the peak years being 1588 (thirty-one) and 1591 (fifteen).[11] This wave of persecution also came with unprecedented attempts to ferret out the inward secrets of religious dissenters. Torture, the most aggressive method of accessing the inwardness of religious dissenters, was never employed more frequently in English history than during the last two decades of the sixteenth century, when it was often (but not exclusively) used in the interrogations of Catholics.[12] However, torture was employed relatively rarely and was only one of several ways to intrude into the conscience of religious dissenters. Oaths, for instance, were employed much more frequently and equally liable to confound policies of outward conformity in that they 'occupied a liminal position between outward behaviour and inward belief, a point where people were required by law to align their words with their thoughts, potentially giving the courts direct access to their consciences'.[13] The 1580s in particular saw the increased use of the *ex officio* oath, which the High Commission had begun to employ under Archbishop Whitgift against Catholics and Puritans alike.[14]

Dissenters found the *ex officio* oath particularly galling because it was imposed on suspects even without previous formal accusation (i.e. *ex officio mero*) and therefore recalled continental inquisitorial tribunals that could likewise initiate, under certain conditions, investigations without a formal accusation.[15] Such leeway in the administration of oaths potentially opened the door for the sort of forensic fishing expeditions that severely undermined the possibility of private dissent. Tellingly, Francis Bacon, the most eloquent spokesman of *politique* religious policies in England, condemned this 'vnbrotherly proceeding'[16] by means of which the ecclesiastical Courts of High Commission cracked down on Puritans and forced them to incriminate themselves. Instead, he counselled reticence and warned that 'he seeketh not vnity but diuision *whi*ch exacteth *tha*t in word*es* *whi*ch men are content to yeild in action'.[17] Shakespeare vividly illustrates such concerns in *King Lear*, when the old King brings

[11] See Nuttall.
[12] The use of torture peaked in the 1590s, with a total of twenty-one torture warrants, followed closely by twenty warrants in the 1580s. For the numbers and the rationale of counting, see Langbein 81–128.
[13] Shagan, 'English Inquisition' 543.
[14] For the debates on the *ex officio* oath in the 1590s, see Shagan, 'English Inquisition'.
[15] However, Leonard Levy's emphasis on the differences between inquisitorial and English common law procedure with regard to self-incrimination (3–42) has been questioned by revisionist historians. For a critique of Levy's 'Whiggish' tendency to trace the privilege against self-incrimination exclusively to English common law, see Helmholz, 'Origins'.
[16] OFB 1:184. [17] OFB 1:185.

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down chaos on the realm because he insists that Cordelia 'heave / [her] heart into [her] mouth' (1.82–3), and *Sir Thomas More* is equally concerned with the consequences of King Henry's unrelenting desire to sound the depths of More's silence in the face of England's break from Rome.[18]

Catholics in particular justified the use of verbal evasion by means of equivocation or mental reservation in response to the obligation to take oaths. However, such techniques of dissimulation were neither uncontroversial nor universally applicable, especially not in matters of faith (which included the 'bloody question' of Papal supremacy), as even their proponents such as Robert Parsons warned.[19] Still, a large number of arguments against the oath evolved throughout the 1580s and 1590s that drew on a variety of sources, including the Bible, the Magna Carta, and common law, as well as canon law.

The nine Puritan ministers on trial in the Star Chamber, for instance, objected to the oath because 'a mans private faults should remayne private to God and him selfe till the lord discover them. And in regard of this righte consider howe the lord ordained wittnesses whearby the magistrate should seeke into the offenses of his subiects and not by oathe to rifle the secretts of theare hearts'.[20] While this argumentation partly draws on Biblical precedent in its insistence on witnesses, it is also indebted to canon law.[21] An important basis against self-incrimination was provided by the canon law maxims that 'no one is bound to betray oneself' (*nemo tenetur prodere se ipsum*) and 'no one is bound to reveal their own shame' (*nemo tenetur detegere turpitudinem suam*).[22] Even Richard Cosin, the oath's most prominent defender, admitted as much in his probably state-sponsored *Apologie for sundrie proceedings by iurisdiction ecclesiasticall* from 1593.[23] However, canon law had also effectively hollowed out the case against self-incrimination with countless formal and material exceptions.[24] The principle did not apply, for instance, when the crime was already alleged by *fama publica*, a potentially flexible category, or when it was particularly severe; as Cosin puts it, 'when as by concealing of the

[18] For a reading of *King Lear* in a Catholic context, more specifically in terms of the 'bloody question' of whether English Catholics would support an invasion of a Catholic foreign power, see Wilson, *Secret Shakespeare* 271–93.

[19] Zagorin 186–220; Carrafiello. [20] Cartwright, *Cartwrightiana* 37.

[21] With regard to the witnesses, Cartwright is presumably alluding to verses such as 2 Cor. 13:1, Deut. 19:15, Matt. 18:16, John 8:17, and Heb. 10:28. For theological arguments against the *ex officio* oath more generally, by both Puritans and Catholics, see Gray.

[22] Helmholz, 'Origins' 981–8. [23] Cosin, *Apologie* 2L4r–v.

[24] For the strain under which the privilege against self-incrimination was put in the inquisitorial prosecution of heresy, see Kelly, 'Inquisition'; Kelly, 'Right to Remain Silent'.

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offence, great perill doth growe, to the Church, as in heresie'.[25] It is worth noting that, for Cosin, even concealed heresy had public consequences. Defenders of the High Commission insisted that it was merely enforcing outward conformity, but Cosin's argumentation erases the very distinction between private and public dissent.[26]

Administering the *ex officio* oath was, the Puritan Thomas Cartwright further objected, a form of 'putt[ing] the conscience uppon the racke and theare to leave it'.[27] Cartwright's metaphorical alignment of the oath with torture is fitting. In his *Briefe treatise of Oathes* (1590?), the Puritan lawyer James Morice singles out the oath and torture as the two illegal tools of forensic inquiry employed by the Elizabethan state against religious dissenters: 'these our lawes neyther vrge by oathe nor force by torment any man to accuse or excuse him selfe, but rejecte the oath as vnbeseeming a well gouerned state or common wealth: And condemne the torture as a thing most cruel & barbarous'.[28] Like the oath, torture was subject to certain regulations in both civil and canon law and could not be applied without precedent proofs, witnesses, or accusation, as not only Puritans but also Catholics such as Thomas Fitzherbert protested.[29] Cosin, however, had as few scruples about torture as about the oath. Rehearsing the medieval conception of heresy as treason against God, he declares: 'I make no doubt, but that, a man may, & ought to be tortured, euen against his natural father, and others, howe neere soeuer. But if this be lawful for treason against man, much more then, for that which is heresie indeede; being no lesse then treason against the diuine maiestie of God himselfe'.[30] Cosin thus abandons, with remarkable ease, not only the distinction between inward and outward dissent but also the distinction between heresy and treason, which was upheld so strenuously in the government propaganda of the 1580s.[31]

However, refusing to take the oath and remaining silent was not an option either since it could qualify as contempt of court.[32] The usual consequence

[25] Cosin, *Apologie* 2Q2r. [26] Compare with Shagan, 'English Inquisition' 561–2.
[27] Cartwright, *Cartwrightiana* 35. [28] Morice 31.
[29] See Fitzherbert, 'Apology' C1v–C2v. However, such restrictions did not apply in Elizabethan England. Torture was not warranted by common law, and its application was not part of the legal process per se, but rather 'police work', with all its murky connotations of extra-legal procedure and the overriding concerns of state security that eluded public or legal accountability (Hanson 31). Jonson's friend John Selden accordingly notes: 'The rack is used nowhere as in England. In other countries 'tis used in judicature . . . [b]ut in England they take a man and rack him, I do not know why, nor when; not in time of judicature, but when somebody bids' (Selden 184–5).
[30] Cosin, *Apologie* 2Ee3r–v. For the medieval conception of heresy as treason against God, see Lecler 1:105–14.
[31] See, for example, [Thomas Norton?]; [William Cecil].
[32] Levy, *Origins of the Fifth Amendment* 132.

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was indefinite detention without trial, the bête noire of state-sponsored legal persecution and an often overlooked aspect of the persecution of Puritan and Catholic dissenters. The Puritan Giles Wigginton, whom Anthony Munday had hauled in during the Marprelate controversy, reports how, already in 1584, Whitgift threatened him with 'rotting in prison and . . . burning of me as if I were an hereticke' because Wigginton would 'not aunswer him to his questions which were against myself'.[33] Silence was thus under enormous pressure and, additionally, always vulnerable to unfavourable interpretation. In his *Apologie*, Cosin even suggests that a refusal to take the oath should be interpreted as an implied confession of the crime in question and penalised accordingly: 'if hee that is *indiciallie* interrogated, will not *answere* at all, or doeth answer obscurely and peruersely; he shall be holden *pro confesso*, and be condemned; no lesse, then if he had *confessed* it'.[34] According to Thomas More's sixteenth-century biographer Nicholas Harpsfield, the former chancellor was equally reproached for his silence, which allegedly was 'a sure token and demonstration of a corrupt and peruerse nature'.[35] More's trial would thus have been a highly topical subject in the context of the debates on the legal status of silence in the 1590s.

According to common law procedure, a refusal to plead in felony cases did not ordinarily lead to conviction by default, but the consequences of silence were even less pleasant. The accused was subjected to peine forte et dure, that is, being pressed to death. Such was the fate, for instance, of Margaret Clitherow, who was pressed to death in 1586 because she refused to plead when she was accused of harbouring Catholic priests in her home, a felony according to the recently passed Act against Jesuits and Seminarists.[36] The severe Act against Recusants from 1593,[37] the companion piece of the Act against Seditious Sectaries discussed in Chapter 3, further limited the possibilities of silence for Catholics. The act stipulated that every suspect who 'shall refuse to answere directlye and trulye whether he be a Jesuite or a Semynarie or Massinge Priest . . . shall for his Disobedience and

[33] Wigginton 380.

[34] Cosin, *Apologie* 2Q3v. There was also statutory precedent for such implied guilt in Henrician heresy legislation, in the Bill concerning the Six Articles (35 Henry 8 c. 5), according to which persons on trial, who 'stand muet or will not directly answer to the same Offences whereof he or they be indicted . . . shall have judgement to suffer lyke paynes of Deathe losses forfaictures and imprisonment, as if the same p[er]son or p[er]sons so indicted had ben therof founde giltie by verdict of xij men' (SR 3:962).

[35] Harpsfield 185.

[36] 27 Eliz. c. 2. On peine forte et dure, see Butler: *Pain, Penance, and Protest*; on Clitherow and her impact on intra-Catholic disputes on conformity and recusancy, see Lake and Questier, *Trials of Margaret Clitherow*.

[37] 35 Eliz. c. 2.

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Contempte in that behalfe be commytted to prison ... without Baile or Mayneprise' until he would comply with his interrogators.[38]

Indeed, no account of Elizabethan persecution is complete without taking note of the sheer scope of the imprisonment of religious dissenters and its often dire consequences. As Allen observed in 1584, 'most prisons in England be ful at this daye, and haue bene for diuers yeares, of honorable and honest persons not to be touched with anie treason, or other offence in the world, other then their profession and faith in Christian religion'.[39] Allen's account is no exaggeration. Of 471 Catholic priests who entered England after 1574, about 285 were imprisoned, more than 30 of them for longer than 10 years, and at least 17 died in prison. The count of lay Catholics who died in prison may even have been as high as ninety-eight, as opposed to sixty-three executions.[40] Many Elizabethan dissenters were thus spared public execution but suffered a no less taxing martyrdom instead.

## Senecan Silence

Possibly written at around the same time as Cosin's defence of the *ex officio* oath, *Sir Thomas More* addresses the issue of enforced oaths in one of its most famous historical manifestations. The text of the play survives in a single manuscript, according to Scott McMillin 'a promptbook prepared for the copying of the actors' parts'.[41] The manuscript has been assigned to Munday, with revisions in the form of corrections, insertions, and additions by five additional hands and the marks of the Master of the Revels, Edmund Tilney. In their edition of the play, Vittorio Gabrieli and Giorgio Melchiori conclude that Munday 'plotted the play, which was actually written in association with Chettle and younger playwrights such as Dekker', and that 'his was the task of giving final shape to the work of his collaborators'.[42] Four of the five additional hands have been ascribed, with varying degrees of confidence, to Henry Chettle, Thomas Dekker, Thomas Heywood, and William Shakespeare.[43] There is no evidence that the play was ever performed, but McMillin has argued that, owing to its unusually large cast, the play may have been intended for Lord Strange's Men.[44] The play is usually believed to have been composed in c. 1593, but there is no direct evidence for a precise

[38] SR 4–2:845. [39] Allen, *Modest defence* A1r. [40] McGrath and Rowe. [41] McMillin 8.
[42] Munday et al., *Sir Thomas More*, eds. Gabrieli and Melchiori 14. Although somewhat more sceptical about the precise details, John Jowett likewise argues for Munday's leading role in his edition of the play (415–23).
[43] For the debate on Shakespeare's contribution to *Sir Thomas More*, see Kirwan 119–27.
[44] McMillin 53–73.

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date either. Jowett, for instance, suggests a date as late as c. 1600 in his edition of the play.[45] Moreover, the date of the revisions is another question altogether and subject to substantial disagreement.[46] In the light of the uncertainties concerning the dating of the play and its revisions as well as the precise nature of the collaboration of its authors, I will not distinguish between the original text and the later additions and revisions or build any argument on authorial attribution or precise contemporary allusions. That is to say, I approach the text of the revised manuscript as if it were a purposeful and unified semantic structure – or at least no less so than one would expect from a single-authored text – whose different parts can legitimately be interpreted in the light of one another.

Melchiori points out that the play never addresses the precise doctrinal issue that is at stake in More's downfall and that 'the author avoids raising the question of the conflict between the Roman and the English Church, replacing it with that of the freedom of the individual conscience from worldly authority'.[47] When asked by his wife, 'What's the offence?', More simply replies: 'Tush, let that pass, we'll talk of that anon' (4.2.77–8). Ironically, More tells us precisely nothing about his beliefs even as he is willing to mount the scaffold for them. The play's authors presumably thought that such matter had no chance of passing the censor, which raises the question of why anyone ever thought that it was a good idea to put Thomas More on the Elizabethan stage.

It has been suggested that the play's anodyne treatment of conscientious dissent may have had the effect, if not the purpose, of 'appeas[ing] a divided audience by portraying More as a joyful martyr who refuses to specify his inward convictions'.[48] As noted before, especially the enforcement of *ex officio* oaths provides a context for the play which was relevant for Catholics as well as Puritans. Melchiori has even suggested that the play addresses specifically the plight of Puritan dissenters.[49] Such speculations are tantalising, but, even though the play addresses concerns that were vital

[45] Munday and Chettle, *Sir Thomas* More, ed. Jowett 424–32.

[46] McMillin suggests that the play was revised for the Admiral's/Prince Henry's Men in the early 1600s (74–95). While Gary Taylor ('Date and Auspices' 120–2) dates the contribution of Hand D, usually ascribed to Shakespeare, to the early seventeenth century on stylometric grounds, McMillin points out that Hand D seemingly disregards the other revisions and Tilney's censorship (135–59). The contribution of Hand D might therefore have preceded them and was perhaps written at, or close to, the time of the play's original composition (ibid.). Finally, Giorgio Melchiori believes that the revisions were all made soon after the play's composition and that Hand D's lack of consistency with the rest of the manuscript may mean that Hand D was simply an incompetent, or at least careless, collaborator ('Dramatic Unity' 84–5, 94–5).

[47] Ibid. 77. [48] Brietz Monta 161. For this argument, see also Shell, *Catholicism* 221.

[49] Melchiori 77–8.

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to Puritans as well, More would have been an unlikely flagship for the Puritan cause of the 1590s. In fact, More's legal writings from the 1530s were vehemently rejected by the Puritan lawyers who argued against self-incrimination in the 1590s because More seemed to lend support to the *ex officio* procedure employed by the High Commission.[50] Even though there was the odd Protestant voice that praised More for his humanist credentials, it seems unlikely that his martyrdom could have been so radically de-confessionalised that the play would not inevitably have evoked a specifically recusant context.[51] If there was any point in writing a play about a martyr who remains paradoxically silent about his beliefs, it has arguably less to do with an attempt to de-confessionalise More's memory than with the raw nerve on which the period's political and legal conceptions of treasonous silence touched.

It seems certainly puzzling that Munday, a notorious anti-Catholic polemicist, should be responsible for a play that celebrates such a prominent model of Catholic dissent as Thomas More. Munday's own dabbling in espionage blatantly disregards the privilege of silence and secrecy with which *Sir Thomas More* is concerned, and his name even surfaces, at least peripherally, in the context of the repressive measures affecting More's grandson, Thomas Roper. In *A breefe aunswere* (1582), Munday's response to his Catholic detractors after the Campion trial, he also printed the apology of one George Elyot, who once served in Roper's household and denounced him to the authorities before he became notorious for his role in the capture of Campion.[52] Refuting the accusation that he opportunistically turned against his Catholic employers in order to obtain a pardon for a murder charge hanging over his head, Elyot claims that he sincerely 'weaned my affection from their abhominable infection'

[50] Cosin reports and replies to the Puritan critique of More in his *Apologie*, Nn2v–4r, Pp1v–Qq1r. For an extended discussion of More's views on the *ex officio* procedure, see Kelly, 'Thomas More on Inquisitorial Due Process'.

[51] On this point, see also Woods 4–6. More's Catholic afterlife was complex and controversial in intra-Catholic disputes such as the Archpriest controversy and concomitant questions concerning loyalty and conformity. In turn, Protestant appreciation of his literary works or his credentials as an Erasmian, reform-minded humanist as represented by Nicolaus Episcopius' edition of More's collected *Lucubrationes*, posthumuously published in the traditionally tolerant climate of Protestant Basel in 1563, gained only limited traction in Protestant England and rarely managed to turn a blind eye on More's faith in a post-Tridentine climate of dogmatic polarisation. See McConica; Questier, 'Catholicism, Kinship'.

[52] As Elyot admits in his *Very true report of the apprehension and taking of that arche Papist Edmond Campion* (1581), '[t]here hath beene great murmuring and grudging against mee, about the committing of . . . maister Thomas Roper, and many faults haue been found for the same . . . But whatsoeuer I did against him I woulde haue doone against mine owne Father' (D1v–D2r). On Elyot more generally and his role in the arrest of Campion, see Kilroy 222–42.

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long before he delivered Campion to the authorities. However, he was 'vsing their companyes still, for that it gaue me the better occasion, to see into the depth of their horrible inuentions'.[53] This self-justification is suspiciously reminiscent of Munday's own claim 'that in France and other places he seemed to favour their [i.e., the Catholics'] religion, because he might thereby undermine them and sift out their purposes'.[54] There may be good reasons to doubt whether Elyot and Munday were indeed saying the truth when they retrospectively explained their problematic association with Catholic networks in terms of espionage. Be that as it may, their self-professed conduct towards Catholics is certainly a far cry from the concern with salvaging a sphere of secrecy and private dissent that is expressed in *Sir Thomas More*.

Had Munday indeed come such a long way in the ten years or more between the Campion trial and the composition *of Sir Thomas More*? Kristin Bezio has suggested that Munday gradually moved towards a more tolerant position in the 1590s, which eventually manifested itself in *Sir Thomas More* and *1 Sir John Oldcastle*.[55] However, there is no concrete biographical evidence that Munday fundamentally changed his attitude towards religious dissent. Even though he would never again attain the level of notoriety that was attached to his name in the wake of the Jesuit mission and the Marprelate Controversy, he kept contributing to the government's suppression of religious dissent up to the second decade of the seventeenth century, as did not go unnoticed by fellow-playwrights such as Ben Jonson.[56] Munday's role in the genesis of *Sir Thomas More* may therefore be more plausibly understood in the light of the material conditions of the commercial theatre than in terms of his personal religious allegiance. As Musa Gurnis has suggested, 'these playwrights became involved with *More* not because of their religious beliefs but because of their expertise with similar plays'.[57] By the same token, Shakespeare might have been hired for his experience with sensitive popular uprisings as in the Jack Cade scenes in *2 Henry VI*.[58] Still, this does not mean that Munday and his collaborators were oblivious to the Catholic appeal of their subject. As Andrew Gurr has suggested, if the play was indeed written for Lord Strange's Men, their choice of subject might be related to the suspected Catholic sympathies of their patron, Ferdinando Stanley.[59] The play's

[53] Quoted in Munday, *Breefe aunswer* B3v. [54] Quoted in Simpson 430. [55] Bezio.
[56] For Ben Jonson's allusions to Munday's continuing government work and the ambiguities surrounding his confessional identity, see Chapter 7.
[57] Gurnis 88. [58] Womersley, 'Shakespeare and Munday' 78.
[59] Gurr, *Shakespearean Playing Companies* 263–4.

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authors may even deliberately have targeted a Catholic audience.[60] As has become clear in the previous chapters, at least Munday certainly had no qualms about wooing religious dissenters in his literary activities despite his track record of aiding church and state initiatives to suppress them.

Even though *Sir Thomas More* is almost completely silent on the Catholicism of its protagonist, its Senecan intertextuality draws attention to and manifests this very silence. All of the Seneca quotes in the play are reflections on silence, secrecy, and the retreat into privacy. That is to say, *Sir Thomas More* substitutes Seneca's writings for a more explicitly Catholic heritage and thus thematises in a self-referential manner the very operations of concealment which they perform. This theme of secrecy, inherent for many spectators in Seneca's Latin itself, is explicitly announced right before Seneca is quoted for the first time, when More tells his wife: 'Thou shalt not understand a word we speak, / We'll talk in Latin' (4.4.34–5). Seneca thus functions as a symbol of deliberate obfuscation, a paradoxical manifestation of the secrecy of faith.

Seneca's works and life resonate in many ways with the plight of religious dissenters. In Augustine's *City of God*, for instance, Seneca is presented as a proponent of outward conformity: 'And so in these rites of the civil theology the role that Seneca prefers the wise man to adopt is to exclude them from his personal worship, but to go through the motions of feigned conformity. For he says: "The wise man will observe all these rites as being enjoined by the laws, not as being pleasing to the gods"' (6.10). Even though Erasmus had convincingly dismissed the correspondence between Seneca and St. Paul as a forgery, the early humanist theory that Seneca was actually a secret Christian at Nero's court, a Nicodemite, died hard and was still put forward by some as late as the seventeenth century.[61] The Catholic Gregory Martin censures Seneca as late as 1578 in his polemical attack on church papists as 'one familier with Saint Paule, but a dissembler for feare of Nero'.[62] At the other end of the spectrum, the

[60] The proposition that they had in mind such a niche market should not be rejected out of hand. In an intra-Catholic controversy on the lawfulness of playgoing in 1617–18, it was claimed that 'most of the principal Catholicks about London doe goe to playes', including priests. Even Catholic opponents of the theatre grudgingly admitted that, at the very least, 'the young of both sexes' did so. See Semper. On the evidence for Catholics involved in the theatre trades and Catholic playgoers, see further Gurr, *Shakespearian Playing Companies* 35; Gurnis 26–30. In addition, even committed recusants, who were training for their ministry in Catholic seminaries abroad, seemed to have a taste for the kind of drama that was staged on London's commercial stage. In the later seventeenth century, there may even have been performances of plays by Shakespeare in Saint-Omer and Douai. See Schrickx, '"Pericles"'; Mayer; Cottegnies.

[61] See Momigliano. [62] Martin A7v.

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highly distinguished philologist Justus Lipsius, a notorious Nicodemite in his own right, admitted in his Seneca edition from 1605 that the surviving correspondence was a forgery, but suggested in turn that a hypothetical original correspondence may simply have been lost.[63]

The Elizabethan translations of Seneca's tragedies with their drastic portrayals of tyranny have likewise been contextualised in religious persecution. The earliest English translator of Seneca's plays (*Troas* in 1559, *Thyestes* in 1560, and *Hercules Furens* in 1561) was Jasper Heywood, the grandson of More's sister Elizabeth Rastell and uncle of John Donne. Heywood lived up to what Donne later characterised as a suicidal family tradition of recusancy. In 1562, Heywood joined the Society of Jesus and suffered his fair share of adversity for his career choice.[64] Heywood was not an exception. As Linda Woodbridge notes, 'the translators of the majority of the Senecan plays were religious dissidents, themselves persecuted for their religious beliefs, on both sides of the Reformational divide'.[65] Woodbridge therefore speculates that 'principled opposition to governmental religious persecution' may have been one of the reasons for this turn to Seneca.[66]

In *Sir Thomas More*, the presence of Seneca is likewise closely intertwined with the suppression of Catholicism. Seneca's plays are quoted three times in

[63] Seneca, *Opera omnia* xxv. The authors of *Sir Thomas More* may not have known that Seneca the philosopher and Seneca the tragedian were one and the same person, a view that gained traction only with Martin Delrio's *Syntagma tragoediae latinae* (1593–4), that is, around the years to which *Sir Thomas More* is usually dated. While the Middle Ages had known only one Seneca, the accepted theory in the Renaissance was that one Seneca had been responsible for the philosophical works and the other for the tragedies. Nonetheless, Curtis Perry notes that the corpora of Seneca *philosophus* and Seneca *tragicus* were often closely associated, and in Elizabethan England the two Senecas even seem to have been conflated at times (309–10). For an account of the controversy over Seneca's authorship, see Machielsen, 'Rise and Fall'.

[64] After his stay at the Jesuit college in Dillingen, Bavaria, Heywood eventually joined the Jesuit mission in 1581 and replaced Campion as its head when the latter was executed. Unlike his nephew, John Donne, Heywood was a staunch proponent of recusancy. He was captured in 1583, subjected to torture, and imprisoned in the Tower, where he was visited by his sister Elizabeth Donne and her son John. Finally, he was deported to France in early 1585, never to return to England until his death in Naples in 1598. See Flynn. Reflecting on the origins of his own suicidal inclinations in *Biathanatos*, Donne recounts that 'I had my first breeding and conversation with men of a suppressed and afflicted Religion, accustomed to the despite of death, and hungry of an imagin'd Martyrdome' (Donne, *Selected Prose* 27). A synod in East Anglia in 1583, over which Heywood presided, had indeed rejected compromises and concluded that 'the going to the protestants church, in such sorte as it is nowe required, is unlawfull and a schismaticall deed, not w$^{th}$standinge all obedience pretended or protestation of the contrarie religion' (*First and Second Diaries* 354–5). Such 'performative conformity', which was not meant to deceive anybody about one's religious identity but simply to signify political obedience, will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

[65] Woodbridge 123. [66] Ibid. 132.

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act 4 of *Sir Thomas More*, that is, when More is first confronted with the request to sign (unspecified) articles against his conscience.[67] After having resigned from his position as chancellor, More quotes Theseus' reflections on the death of his son in *Phaedra*: '*Humida vallis raros patitur fulminis ictus* [Thunderbolts rarely strike / In rainy valleys] / More rest enjoys the subject meanly bred / Than he that bears the kingdom in his head' (4.4.36–8). The point of Theseus' metaphor is, as the chorus elaborates, that safety lies outside the sphere of high politics:

> How many chances turn the wheels of human life!
> Fortune keeps her temper with the lowly,
> the blows of heaven are weaker on the weak:
> peace and obscurity keep simple people safe,
> and those who live in hovels live to a ripe old age. (ll. 1123–7)

More repeatedly voices the same conviction, namely, that the only hope to fly under the radar of Fortune lies, as Seneca signals in several of his tragedies, in social and political inconspicuousness.[68] William Roper, More's son-in-law, accordingly eulogises Morean domesticity and privacy as a safe retreat from matters of state and political intrigue: 'Here, public care / Gags not the eyes of slumber, here fierce riot / Ruffles not proudly in a coat of trust' (4.4.13–15). More too drops a number of gnomic pearls of wisdom such as 'he that ne'er knew court courts sweet content' (4.4.28) or 'Here let me live estranged from great men's looks / They are like golden flies on leaden hooks' (4.4.107–8), which drive home the treacherous and dangerous nature of the political life. Such praise of the private life is particularly significant in the context of religious dissent, considering that *politique* theorists of toleration advocated privacy as a sanctuary from religious persecution. According to Lipsius, someone who merely offends 'priuately in matter of religion' and who 'is quiet and silent at home' is not to be penalised.[69] Jean Bodin likewise recommends that 'no man be forbidden the priuat exercise of such his

[67] 'If the cure is bad, better to be sick' (*Oedipus* l. 517), cited in *More* 4.2.83: '*Ubi turpis est medicina, sanari piget*'; 'Thunderbolts rarely strike / In rainy valleys' (*Phaedra* ll. 1132–3), cited in *More* 4.3.36: '*Humida vallis raros patitur fulminis ictus*'; 'Small worries speak, but great ones hold their tongues' (*Phaedra* l. 607), cited in *More* 4.4.171: *Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*'. All references to Seneca's plays are from '*Six Tragedies*, trans. Emily Wilson, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

[68] One might speak of a typically Senecan sentiment and imagery; see also *Oedipus* ll. 8–11. The same imagery occurs also in *Thyestes* ll. 446–70, but with a more philosophical bent, invoking the Stoicist ideal of self-sufficiency and the Stoicist conception of false goods and false evils.

[69] Lipsius, *Sixe bookes [Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex]* 65.

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religion'.[70] Senecan precepts for avoiding Fortune thus easily map onto the struggle for survival of early modern religious dissidents.

More's biography provides, as it were, a test case for the viability of a *politique* distinction between public and private dissent. Unlike the protagonist of *Sir John Oldcastle*, More never proselytises or is involved in any sort of oppositional agitation against Henry's anti-Roman policies. The exclusion of any trace of More's Catholicism may, to some extent, be the result of a desire to make the play palatable to the censor, but it is also fully in keeping with the play's characterisation of More as a man of extraordinary prudence, 'a learned man [who] knows what the world is' (3.2.347–8). It is therefore all the more significant that under the political regime depicted in the play, even a man like More ends up as a martyr, despite all his efforts to keep a low profile and to remain silent. The play's protagonist thus bears remarkable similarities to Seneca, who likewise failed in his attempts to retreat from Nero's regime into privacy.[71]

The historical More had made his original bid to forestall Fortune by retreating into privacy with his resignation from the chancellorship on 16 May 1532. One day earlier, convocation had accepted the Submission of the Clergy and effectively resigned ecclesiastical jurisdiction to the authority of the monarch. As Harpsfield, More's biographer and one of the play's main sources, tells us,

> *Sir* Thomas More, partlye (as a deepe wise man) foreseing what inconueniences and troubles he might purchase himselfe with intermedling of the princely affaires, and [fore]seing the tempestuous stormie worlde that in deede afterwarde did most terribly insurge, . . . did not in any wise intermedle and cumber himselfe *wit*h any worldly matters, and least of all with the kinges great combersome matter of his mariage, or any other of his publike proceedinges.[72]

However, Harpsfield's account is deceptive. More did not yet fall completely silent, but kept churning out theological and legal works, repeatedly veering towards politically dangerous territory. As Peter Marshall puts it, '[t]he implicit bargain of May 1532 – that More would be left alone if he kept his mouth shut – was now in pieces, and Henry's anger against his former chancellor was beginning to swell'.[73] Some two years after his resignation from office, More was summoned before a royal commission

[70] Bodin, *Of the laws and cvstomes [République]* 539.
[71] On Seneca's difficulties in disentangling himself from Nero's regime and the *Epistulae morales* as a product of his inner exile, see Wilson, *Greatest Empire* 163–214.
[72] Harpsfield 150. [73] Marshall, 'Last Years' 119.

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in Lambeth on 13 April 1534 in order to affirm by oath the validity of the Act of Succession.[74]

*Sir Thomas More*, on the other hand, compresses events and throws More's dilemma into sharp relief. In the play, More resigns from the chancellorship only *after* he has been summoned to Lambeth, without any previous warning signs, in order to subscribe to what the play vaguely describes as '[t]hese articles enclosed, first to be viewed / And then to be subscribed to' (4.1.70–1). More is thus suddenly put on the spot. Affirming the legitimacy of the Boleyn offspring would imply a denial of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Pope, who had never accepted Henry's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Either More affirms the King's policies in order to save his neck, or he violates his conscience. In the play, lightning thus strikes out of the blue. According to the play's compressed chronology, the blame lies not with More for failing to remain silent but with the King for giving him no chance to do so.

By laying the blame for the breakdown of silence entirely on the government, the play challenges, by contemporary extension, Bacon's claim that the Queen had no interest in her subject's inner lives. Even though, in his *Certaine Obseruations Vppon a Libell* (1593), Bacon praises Elizabeth for her refusal to revive Henrician legislation according to which 'the oathe of Supremacie mought have bin*e* offred at the kings pleasure to anie Subiecte thoughe he kepte his conscience never so modestlie to him self',[75] such arbitrary forensic fishing expeditions were still possible with the *ex officio* oath. Its apologists, of course, insisted that the oath was not employed in order to investigate secret crimes. According to Cosin, for instance, when 'a man be once discouered . . . by Presentment, denunciation, Fame, or such like, according to lawe', the offence is no longer 'simple secret, but reuealed (in some sort) abroade'.[76] The historical More's previous lack of discretion on a number of occasions, such as his refusal to attend the Boleyn wedding, could likewise be said to justify the suspicions concerning his subsequent silence.[77] However, the arbitrary sifting of More's conscience in the play, where it is not preceded by any such indiscretions, echoes the late Elizabethan critique of the *ex officio* oath as an illegitimate intrusion into a person's secret thoughts.

Initially, More decides to play for time: 'Subscribe these articles? Stay, let us pause: / Our conscience first shall parley with our laws' (1.4.73–4).

[74] 25 Hen. VIII c. 22. [75] OFB 1:379.
[76] Cosin, *Apologie* 2L4v. For Cosin's consonance with contemporary continental canonists on this point, see Helmholz, 'Origins' 976–7.
[77] On this point, see Helmholz, 'Natural Law' 56–9.

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More's circumspection is contrasted with the intransigence of his fellow-martyr, Bishop Fisher, who immediately rejects the articles:

> Subscribe to these? Now good Sir Thomas Palmer,
> Beseech the king that he will pardon me.
> My heart will check my hand whilst I do write:
> Subscribing so, I were an hypocrite. (4.1.76–9)

Fisher is immediately summoned 't'appear / Before his majesty, to answer there / This capital contempt' (4.1.81–3). This is, apart from a brief scene in which Fisher is led to the Tower (4.3), the last we see of him. More, on the other hand, withholds a response and resigns from the chancellorship in order to navigate at once the Scylla of perjury and the Charybdis of treason:

> Sir, tell his highness I entreat
> Some time for to bethink me of this task.
> In the meanwhile I do resign mine office
> Into my sovereign's hands. (4.1.86–9)

Already now, however, it is obvious that More's temporary silence will not be accepted. Palmer interprets it not as a postponement but as a 'refusal' (4.1.91) and proclaims the 'prepared order from the king' (4.1.92) for this case, namely, that More should be placed under house arrest in his home in Chelsea. Tellingly, not only the King's representatives within the play but also the Master of the Revels, who was tasked with licensing the play in the late Elizabethan period, found More's answer inacceptable and wrote in the margin of the manuscript: 'ALL ALTR'. Janet Clare has suggested that interventions such as this explain 'the constitutive exclusions, the "silences" in the text' concerning the confessional significance of its subject matter.[78] However, it is worth pointing out that what Tilney censors here is not More's confession of his religious beliefs but his refusal to reveal them in the first place. Not just open dissent but mere silence has become intolerable.

The theme of silence is particularly prominent in the remaining two Seneca quotations of the play. When More is finally brought into the Tower, Roper cites Seneca's *Phaedra*: '*Curae leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent*' (4.4.171) – 'Small worries speak, but great ones hold their tongues' (*Phaedra* l. 607). The words are Phaedra's, shortly before she confesses her illicit desire to her stepson. In silence there is, or would have

[78] Clare, 'Reform and Order' 6.

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been, safety. Elizabethan Catholics too harboured supposedly terrible secrets and suffered spiritual afflictions that could well cost them their life if they revealed them. However, silence is a privilege that is under assault, in the play as well as in the late sixteenth century. More himself draws attention to this denial of silence two scenes earlier when he responds to Roper's advice to comply with the King's will: '*Ubi turpis est medicina, sanari piget*' (4.2.83) – 'If the cure is bad, better to be sick' (*Oedipus* l. 517). The quote was crossed out by Tilney and has accordingly been read as a gesture of resistance on More's part.[79] The Senecan context, however, suggests a more complex scenario. In Seneca's play, Oedipus insists that '[i]gnorance is no cure for suffering' (l. 515) and urges the loyal Creon to reveal the identity of Laius' murderer, to which Creon replies: 'If the cure is bad, better to be sick.' In this sense, More's refusal of the cure is therefore not so much a gesture of open resistance as a futile plea for silence.

However, Tilney had good reason to object to More's quote from *Oedipus*. The subject of incest, which Creon here refuses to reveal, is a particularly sensitive theme in the context of More's scruples concerning the Boleyn wedding. In Nicholas Sander's *De Origine ac Progressu Schismatis Anglicani* (1585), the first comprehensive ecclesiastical history of the English Reformation to be published from a Catholic perspective, we learn that Henry was not only Anne Boleyn's husband but also her father.[80] Significantly, Sander claims to have learned about Elizabeth's parentage from More's nephew William Rastell.[81] This scandalous rumour, which Sander thus traces to the More circle, was revived on a large scale in the propagandistic prelude to the Spanish Armada. For instance, the Spanish Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra, who had adapted Sander's work in his *Ecclesiastical History of the Schism of the Kingdom of England* (1588), interpreted the incestuous relation between Henry and Anne as a key event in the spiritual degradation of England into heresy and tyranny: 'We have seen the wretched beginning of the English schism, how it was planted with incest and lust, and has been watered with innocent blood, and has grown and sustained itself with crimes and tyranny. The sin and the comeuppance of King Henry and Anne

[79] Munday et al., *Sir Thomas More*, eds Gabrieli and Melchiori 18.

[80] For the great impact of Sander's work on Catholic historiography of the English Reformation, see Highley. Although the rumour of Elizabeth's incestuous origins does not seem to have circulated widely in print before Sander, it may well have had its source in 'rumors current during Anne's lifetime that her mother had been the king's mistress' (Warnicke 244).

[81] Sander B6v–B7v.

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Boleyn'.[82] Ribadeneyra further used the rumour to whip up anti-Tudor sentiment in his 'Exhortation to the Armada',[83] just as Cardinal Allen cited it in his justification of a Catholic uprising at home, declaring that 'all the issue that should procede of [Henry's] incestuous copulation with Anne Bullen, was moste iustly declared illegitimate and vncapable of succession to the croune of England'.[84]

An extensive Protestant response to Sanders, which also rehearsed and refuted the allegation of Elizabeth's incestuous parentage at length,[85] was published as late as in 1593. Apparently, the charge of incest was still in need of refutation at a time when the play may have been written. In *Sir Thomas More*, the theme of incest is already prepared with the reference to *Phaedra* but finds its most striking treatment in More's citation of Creon's refusal to reveal Laius' murderer – and thus the true nature of the relationship between Oedipus and Jocasta. Considering that the charge of incest was also levelled by militant Catholics against Henry Tudor and Anne Boleyn, More's appropriation of Creon's silence can be read as a shrewd, intertextual instance of the rhetorical figure *ocultatio* (also *paralipsis* or *praeteritio*). That is to say, More alludes to the most sordid rumours surrounding Henry's love life and its momentous political implications for Elizabethan Catholicism – by claiming to remain silent on it. More's Senecan silence is thus teasing and defensive at the same time, densely charged with meaning even as it claims the privilege *not* to signify.

Creon's predicament of being forced to speak out an unpleasant truth is a highly suggestive intertext for *Sir Thomas More* and the plight of English Catholics who were forced either to betray themselves or to perjure themselves. Oedipus' attempt to assuage Creon, 'Did anyone ever get punished for speaking under orders?' (l. 529), rings hollow. Just as Creon feared, Oedipus does not really warm to the idea that he is supposed to have murdered his own father: 'Now! You! I have got the cunning conspirators: / Tiresias invented it, using the gods / as cover for his trick. He promised my throne to you' (ll. 668–70). Creon's alleged instrumentalisation of religion as a 'cover for his trick', an ideological pretext for treason, recalls Elizabethan anti-Catholic polemics against the supposedly subversive purpose of the Jesuit mission. In turn, Creon's insistence on his 'long loyalty' (l. 685), equally prominent in Elizabethan Catholic complaints that they harboured no treasonous designs, goes

[82] Ribadeneyra 543. [83] Quoted in Ribadeneyra. 741. [84] Allen, *Admonition* A5r.
[85] Cowell 111–30.

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unheard as he is dragged off to the dungeons. Finally, even silence, the last refuge of freedom, is denied and interpreted as treason in a manner that anticipates More's own dilemma:

CREON. I wish I could keep quiet. Can one hope
for freedom from a king?
OEDIPUS. Often silent freedom
hurts kings and kingdoms even more than speech.
CREON. Where silence is forbidden, what freedom can there be?
OEDIPUS. If you are silent when ordered to speak, you are a traitor. (ll. 523–7)

Seneca's reflections on the political significance of silence obviously appealed to *politique* theorists of religious toleration. Lipsius, for instance, cites *Oedipus* when he recommends toleration of private dissent: 'it is the least freedome that can be demaunded of a Prince, to haue licence to hold one's peace'.[86] However, the political paranoia of a tyrant in the making, a greater fear of what is *not* said than what is said, undermines this freedom to remain silent for Creon as well as for More as their silence is turned into treason.

More's resignation from office turns out to be an insufficient safeguard against the pressures to declare himself with regard to Henry's anti-Roman policies. When he repeatedly refuses to subscribe to the articles, he is arrested 'in the King's name of high treason' (4.4.158).[87] Crucially, the play offers no other legal justification for More's conviction than his refusal to subscribe, even though Harpsfield reports that the indictment also included charges of collusion with Fisher and the explicit denial of royal supremacy in the presence of Richard Rich.[88] Perhaps in an attempt to avoid further censorship, the playwrights may have omitted the additional charges in order to avoid the association of an otherwise admirable protagonist with treason, which could be construed as ennobling political resistance. Such an attempt to forestall censorship, however, would have been a double-edged sword since any attempt to whitewash More's treason highlights the arbitrary rule of a King who even punishes

[86] Lipsius, *Sixe bookes [Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex]* 65.

[87] Historically, the charge of the initial attainder was misprision of treason, as Harpsfield correctly recounts (156–7). For the relevant misprision clause in the Act of Succession, see SR 3:474. For the act of attainder (26 Henry 8 c. 23), see SR 3:538. It was only in the second Act of Succession (28 Henry 8, c. 7) that the refusal to take the oath, presumably in reaction to More's trial (Bellamy 36), fell under the scope of high treason.

[88] Harpsfield 183–92. However, scholarly opinion differs on whether More was indeed indicted on all points (Kelly, 'Procedural Review' 9–11) or whether the allegations of treasonous silence and collusion with Fisher were eventually dropped (Derret 60).

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silence. Evidently, there was no viable solution to the problem. The playwrights could represent More either as an honourable man refusing obedience in the name of true religion or as the innocent and passive victim of an erratic and paranoid tyrant, and neither scenario is very flattering to the Tudor dynasty.

## *Sir Thomas More* and Passive Resistance

As Knapp has suggested, *Sir Thomas More* can be read as 'an acid test of conformity: how, More's life enables the play to ask, can an Englishman maintain both his freedom of conscience and his obedience to authority?'.[89] The lack of a critical agreement on the political stance of *Sir Thomas More* suggests that he cannot. Melchiori, for instance, believes that the play 'had been plotted with a precise intention: that of showing the abuses perpetrated under cover of the absolute power of the king'.[90] On the other hand, William B. Long argues that the play drives home, in its depiction of the anti-alien riots as well as More's fall, 'the ultimate evil of disobeying the monarch'.[91] Such disagreement on the play's stance towards political resistance can be read, I suggest, as a symptom of the crisis of loyalty that is depicted in *Sir Thomas More*.

When More placates the anti-alien riots, he refers to 'the most cited of all texts on the foundations of political life throughout the age of the Reformation',[92] Romans 13:1–7: ''tis a sin / Which oft th'apostle did forewarn us of, / Urging obedience to authority' (2.3.99–101).[93] Using the same argument as Prince John in *2 Henry IV*, More asks: 'What do you then, / Rising 'gainst him that God Himself installs / But rise 'gainst God?' (2.3.112–14). By equating rebellion against the magistrate with rebellion against God, More seems, at first glance, to condemn his own later disobedience on the grounds of religion. However, as Fisher protests in the play, '[t]here lives a soul, that aims at higher things / Than temporary pleasing earthly kings' (4.3.3–4). Fisher's words would likely have reminded audiences of Acts 5:29: 'We oght rather to obey God then men.' The difficulty of harmonising this verse with Rom. 13 lies at the heart of the play's politics.

The potential conflict between the two Biblical passages is already manifest in 'An exhortacion to obedience' from *The Book of Homilies*, which was routinely read to English churchgoers and which cites both

[89] Knapp 149. [90] Melchiori, 'Dramatic Unity' 77. [91] Long 51. [92] Skinner 2:15.
[93] Hand D's invocation of Rom. 13 is indeed typically Shakespearean. Thomas Fulton counts at least twenty-six references to Rom. 13 in Shakespeare's dramatic oeuvre, predominantly in the histories (Fulton 208).

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Rom. 13 and Acts 5:29. The homily resolves the apparent contradiction between them by recommending passive resistance, if obedience to the magistrate should prove incompatible with obedience to God:

> Yet let vs beleue vndoubtedly, (good christian people) that we maie not obey kynges, Magistrates, or any other (though thei be our awne fathers) if thei would commaunde vs to do, any thyng contrary to Gods commaundementes. In such a case, we ought to say with the Apostles: we must rather obeye God, then man. But neuertheles in that case, we maye not in any wyse resist violently, or rebell against rulers, or make any insurrection, sedicion, or tumultes, either by force of armes, (or otherwaies) against the anoynted of the lord, or any of his appoynted officers. But we must in suche case, paciently suffre all wronges and iniuries, referryng the iudgement of our cause onely to God.[94]

However, with its insistence on the priority of obeying God, passive resistance became a political liability when the Elizabethan settlement was challenged by Catholic and Puritan dissenters alike.[95] 'An Homilee agaynst disobedience and wylful rebellion' (1571), which was added to the second edition of the second volume of *The Book of Homilies* after the Catholic Northern Rising, fails to discuss passive resistance at all. Presumably in reaction to the threat of religious resistance, the homily is also silent on Acts 5:29, even though it is about twice as long as the earlier 'Exhortacion to obedience'. In fact, Acts 5:29 was routinely passed over in Protestant interpretations of Rom. 13.[96] The Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible (New Testament 1582) redresses the balance. According to the annotations to Rom. 13:3, obedience to the secular magistrate is due 'onely in such things as they may lawfully commaund', and subjects are 'bound vnder paine of damnation to obey their Apostles, and Prelates, and not to obey their kings or Emperours, in matters of religion'.[97] Divine authority is thus not invested in the secular magistrate alone but also in the Church.

In the play, More has a similarly conditional understanding of the injunction to obey the secular magistrate, but he does not invoke the Church as an alternative authority that might actively intervene in the English political scene. More carefully resists the Elizabethan stereotype of the inherently seditious Catholic that took root after Pope Pius V had absolved English Catholics from their obedience to Elizabeth in

[94] *Certayne sermons* Siv.
[95] For the concept of passive resistance in Elizabethan political theology, see Greaves 27–30.
[96] Fulton 209. [97] *Douay-Rheims New Testament* 416.

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1570. Instead, he scrupulously follows a course of passive resistance, a position that eventually received its temporary blessing even from the highest echelons of the Catholic hierarchy between c. 1580 and 1584, when the papal bull *Regnans in excelsis* was partially suspended and the Jesuits launched their English mission.[98] At least in the play, More's resistance consists only in the passive refusal to subscribe and not in any political action. Neither does he, as 'An exhortacion to obedience' puts it, 'make any insurrection, sedicion, or tumultes, either by force of armes, (or otherwaies)'. He refuses to share the reasons for his non-compliance even with his own family. If More seems to be 'contradicting his own case to the citizens',[99] the reason is not that he is inconsistent but that the Biblical amnesia of Tudor political theology has rendered More's political stance opaque. Within the framework of passive resistance, More never fundamentally questions the imperative of obedience in Rom. 13.

If the play was meant to give voice to a contemporary Catholic position, it would arguably have been a form of loyalism which was prominently represented by the Brownes of Cowdray and their entourage, with whom the More family became closely associated in the late sixteenth century.[100] Anthony Browne, first Viscount of Montague, had made a name for himself among Elizabethan Catholics when he brazenly opposed Elizabeth's Act of Supremacy (1559) and the Act for the Assurance of the Queen's Power (5 Eliz. c. 1) from 1563, according to which the repeated refusal to take the Oath of Supremacy fell under the scope of high treason. With respect to the latter, Montague defended the privilege of silence in the House of Lords in a manner that recalls the conflict of conscience in *Sir Thomas More*:

> For what a man is there so without courage and stomach, or void of all honour, that can consent or agree to receive an opinion and new religion by force and compulsion; or will swear that he thinketh the contrary to that he thinketh. To be still and dissemble may be borne and suffered for a time; to keep his reckoning with God alone; but to be compelled to lie and to swear, or else to die therefore, are things that no man ought to suffer and endure.[101]

What is at stake in Montague's critique of the Oath of Supremacy as well as in *Sir Thomas More* is the endangered privilege of silence. Shortly before his

[98] See Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise* 35–46. [99] Fulton 208.

[100] Questier, 'Catholicism, Kinship' 498–500. The classic account of Catholic loyalism is Pritchard. More recent scholarship has come to emphasise that loyalism was not an inert and apolitical stance but often subject to ideological tension and the dynamic manoeuvring of kinship networks and changing power constellations. For the Montagues in particular, see Questier, 'Loyal to a Fault'; Questier, *Catholicism and Community*.

[101] Quoted in Strype 1–1:444–5.

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death, Montague once more gave an account of his loyal dissent in a speech delivered in West Horseley Manor on 27 January 1592, which recapitulated the same concerns with silence and loyalty that are so central to *Sir Thomas More*. Montague expressed his loyalty to the Queen by proclaiming that 'yf the Pope or the Kinge of Spayne or anye other forreyne Potentate shoulde offer to invade this realme . . . I woulde be one of the fyrst that shoulde beare armes agenst him'.[102] He further insisted that he kept his faith, like the protagonist of *Sir Thomas More*, to himself and disavowed any political agitation or any desire to proselytise: 'I am a Catholyque in my religeon *whi*ch I keepe to my selff; I seeke to drawe no man to that religeon, neather chylde nor servant, but let them doo theyr conscyences therein as god shall putt in theyre myndes . . . And theare ys no man that when he cometh to me to serve me I doo aske what religeon he ys of'.[103] Of course, Montague's declaration, 'I am a Catholyque in my religeon *whi*ch I keepe to my selff', is a performative self-contradiction.[104] However, the point is not so much actual secrecy as a political fiction of secrecy that arguably serves to disavow any claim that his Catholic faith should be officially recognised by the Protestant state.

There is no concrete biographical evidence that allows us to place Munday in Montague's milieu. However, he knew one of the Viscount's former servants, the aforementioned George Elyot, who was responsible for the arrest of the Jesuit Campion. Elyot had been dismissed from Montague's service in 1564 because he shot one of his deer, before he found employment in the household of More's grandson Thomas Roper (the son of William Roper and Margaret Roper, née More).[105] Roper, one of many Catholics whom Elyot denounced to the authorities, was related to Montague by marriage to his sister, Lucy Browne,[106] and seems to have adopted the Viscount's course of conformity in the early 1580s, or at least had promised to do so after having been arrested in 1581.[107]

In the meantime, other family members moved in the opposite direction. The martyr's grandson Thomas More II was arrested in the early 1580s at Greenstreet House, East Ham, where he had been involved with the clandestine Jesuit press, which produced, among other works, Parsons' anti-conformist manifesto *Brief discours contayning certayne reasons why Catholiques refuse to goe to Church* (1580).[108] It was on the occasion of

[102] Quoted in Questier, 'Loyal to a Fault' 252. [103] Ibid. 251. [104] Ibid.
[105] On Elyot's service in the Montague household, see Kilroy 222.
[106] Questier, 'Catholicism, Kinship' 498. [107] Ibid. 487n.40. [108] Ibid. 486n.32.

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Thomas More II's arrest at Greenstreet House in 1582 that Richard Topcliffe confiscated a copy of Harpsfield's manuscript biography of the martyr among More's papers. Intriguingly, this might also explain how one of the main sources of *Sir Thomas More* eventually fell into the hands of Munday, who worked for Topcliffe in the 1580s.[109] At any rate, it seems at least plausible that Munday was aware of different approaches to the question of conformity among English Catholics generally and More's descendants specifically, not only through his brief stint on the continent, but also through his contacts as an anti-Catholic propagandist and recusant hunter.

Different approaches to conformity evidently caused tensions among More's descendants, as is suggested by the disappointment which Cresacre More, son of Thomas More II, expressed in his *Life of Sir Thomas More* (1631?) about his uncles, who 'degenerated both from that religion and those manners, which Sir Thomas More had left as it were a happy depositum unto his children and family'.[110] Some of these tensions may also be registered in the contradictory stance of the character William Roper in the play, who initially urges More to subscribe, but later in the play anticipates the recusant *mystique* which some of his descendants began to cultivate in the 1580s: 'The blood you have bequeathed these several hearts / To nourish your posterity, stands firm, / And as with joy you led us first to rise, / So with like hearts we'll lock preferment's eyes' (4.4.49–52). However, with its protagonist, who claims to be loyal to his monarch and keeps his reasons for refusing to subscribe to the 'articles' to himself, *Sir Thomas More* is congruent with the stance of Viscount Montague, one of the period's most prominent Catholic loyalists.

At the same time, the play is deeply pessimistic about the viability of Catholic loyalism. The Earl of Surrey refuses to interpret passive resistance as anything else but plain disobedience: ''Tis strange that my lord chancellor should refuse / The duty that the law of God bequeaths / Unto the king' (4.1.106–8). More himself insists on his loyalty to the very end. Before he mounts the scaffold, Shrewsbury admonishes him: ''twere good you'd publish to the world / Your great offence unto his majesty' (5.4.68). However, like the Jesuit Campion, whose execution Munday had

[109] See Anderegg. In the 1580s, even as late as 1592, Munday appears to have worked for the notorious torturer and priest hunter Topcliffe (Hamilton, *Munday and the Catholics* xxi).

[110] More 291. Up to the 1580s, many family members seem to have conformed to the Edwardian and Elizabethan Church of England. See Aveling; for the uncles to which Cresacre More alludes, see especially 35–6.

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witnessed in 1581, More does no such thing.[111] On the contrary, he insists that 'his majesty hath been ever good to me' (5.4.71–2). Earlier, he even proclaims euphemistically that the King is doing him a favour by setting him 'at liberty' (5.3.80). By refusing to acknowledge that he is being punished, he does not simply profess his unfailing loyalty; he also denies that he has done any wrong in the first place.

However, More's attempt to harmonise Rom. 13 with Acts 5:29 in the form of passive resistance has indeed become impossible under a regime that does not recognise silence and forces its subjects to declare themselves. Peter's admonition that '[w]e ought rather to obey God then men' can only be reconciled with the Pauline injunction to obey the secular magistrate 'for conscience sake' (Rom. 13:5) if the power of the secular magistrate does not extend any further than the outward self. *Sir Thomas More* shows that if the magistrate does not recognise the difference between secular and spiritual government and conflates a subject's spiritual duty of allegiance with their political duty of allegiance, it becomes impossible to give 'to Cesar, the things which are Cesars, and giue vnto God, those which are Gods' (Matt. 22:21). *Sir Thomas More* thus gives voice to a political crisis of legitimacy and loyalty that arises from a denial of silence as a means to accommodate confessional pluralism, at least in the form of private dissent, within the Christian commonwealth.

## 'A Spectacle to the World, to the Angels and to Men'

Throughout the play, More displays almost Falstaffian histrionic tendencies. More is a lover and patron of the theatre, as is attested by his employment of an acting troupe in act 3 in order to entertain his guests. Like Falstaff, he proves a brilliant and convincing extemporiser when he substitutes for one of the players: 'Would not my lord make a rare player? . . . Did ye mark how extemprically he fell to the matter, and spake Luggins's part almost as it is in the very book set down?' (3.2.295–9). As in the case of Falstaff, More's theatricality also spills over into real life, for instance when he changes identities with his servant Randall in order to play a prank on Erasmus and commands his servant to 'act my part' (3.2.45). With such instances of meta-theatricality, the play suggests that More's identity is nothing but a role that can be adopted, exchanged, and abandoned at will. The same impression is conveyed when Randall,

[111] Campion's rude violation of the etiquette of the scaffold is documented by Munday, *Discouerie* F8r; Alfield C1r; Allen, *Briefe historie* d1r.

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who plays More, tells Erasmus with exquisite irony and the obligatory pun on More's name: 'I am neither more nor less than merry Sir Thomas always' (3.1.167). Highlighting the dialectics of performative identity, Randall both is More and is not ('neither more nor less'). The play's metatheatricality thus seems to reduce the notion of selfhood to a mere mask, nothing but an illusion of depth that can never materialise in the world of the theatre.

However, More's role-playing not only is a self-indulgent stroll through a fictional hall of mirrors but also has substantial ethical implications. So much is evident when More 'conspires' with the cutpurse Lifter in order to teach Justice Suresby a lesson. After Suresby scolds Lifter's victim for tempting thieves by walking around with a large sum of money on him, More employs Lifter in order to steal Suresby's purse and instil some humility into the Justice. Even though More pretends to intend no more than 'a merry jest' (1.2.76), Machiavellian deceptiveness lurks at the margins of More's playful theatricality and would most likely have been an acute concern for Protestant audiences, who probably knew the merry Thomas More rather as a scoffing persecutor from Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*.[112] We get a glance of the potential Machiavellian lurking in a man with More's gifts of self-concealment in Lifter's initial distrust:

> You are too deep for me to deal withal,
> You are known to be one of the wisest men
> That is in England. I pray ye master sheriff,
> Go not about to undermine my life. (1.2.65–8)

However, More insists that he is a 'true subject to my King' (1.2.69), and Lifter eventually recognises the moral purpose of the exercise:

> I see the purpose of this gentleman
> Is but to check the folly of the justice
> For blaming others in a desperate case
> Wherein himself may fall as soon as any. (1.2.91–4)

Significantly, the bottom line of More's jest anticipates his later plea for empathy with the strangers' case. When he addresses the anti-alien rioters, he similarly challenges them to imagine themselves in the strangers' position: 'What would you think / To be thus used?' (2.3.149–50). It is the flexibility of theatrical identity, or rather the theatre as a space for the imaginative exchange of identities, that hones the spectators' ability to

[112] On Foxe's increasingly critical treatment of More over successive editions of *Actes and Monuments*, see Dillon 63–4.

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empathise with and imaginatively occupy the place of the poor, the disenfranchised, and the strangers. More's incessant role-playing thus is not indicative of moral degeneration, as the anti-theatricalists of the period argued, but serves a higher moral purpose.

More differs from the Machiavellian villain, whose selfhood is often characterised by radical, although doomed, declarations of autonomy (Eisaman Maus 53), as in the case of Richard III, who proclaims that 'I am myself alone' (3H6 5.6.83). More's theatricality is not an act of self-invention. Erasmus' famous praise '[n]obody is less swayed by public opinion' than More, despite 'the skill with which he adapts himself to the mood of anyone',[113] attests to a stable core of his identity that is also emphasised in the play. Despite his many performances, More grounds his identity in God, as becomes increasingly clear once the play leaves its meta-theatrical ironies behind. Whereas Iago proclaims that ''[t]is in ourselves that we are thus and thus' (1.3.315), More eventually recognises that '[i]t is in heaven that I am thus and thus, / And that which we profanely term our fortunes / Is the provision of the power above' (3.2.1–3). Roper too encourages his father-in-law to 'be still yourself', even though no man's 'garment . . . or the loose points / That tie respect unto his awful place' can bypass 'the maw of time' (4.4.41–7). Selfhood, Roper seems to imply, can only remain stable if it is metaphysically anchored in a divine order and transcends a world of appearances that is in constant flux.

More's accommodating performances are finally conflated with his providential sense of selfhood in his use of the *theatrum mundi* topos in his martyrdom. The play thus reiterates what Stephen Greenblatt has characterised as More's reconciliation of his 'role-playing' and 'highly complex consciousness of fashioning himself that marked his intense individuality' with his desire to be 'absorbed into a larger totality, into the total life of Christ'.[114] When Shrewsbury admonishes More that ''twere good you'd publish to the world / Your great offence unto his majesty' (5.4.68), the latter admits no offence but remarks that 'my offence to his highness makes me of a state pleader a stage player (though I am old, and have a bad voice) to act this last scene of my tragedy' (5.4.72–5). One possible reading is that More is a player insofar as he continues to pretend innocence even though he has been convicted of treason. In a more sympathetic reading, however, More is perfectly honest in his protestations of innocence. In his final performance, then,

[113] CWE 7:19. [114] Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 72.

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More does not dissemble or deceive anyone but acts out a divine plan and gives transparent testimony to the truth. Martyrs are literally witnesses, as the etymological roots of the term make clear, and their testimony is necessarily performative.

The need for an audience, for whose benefit this theatre of cruelty is put on stage, is asserted by the apostle Paul: 'God hathe set forthe vs the laste Apostles, as men appointed to death: for we are made a gasing stocke vnto the worlde, and to the Angels, and to men' (1 Cor. 4:9). English Catholics frequently cited this Pauline verse in relation to their martyrdom. Campion, for instance, quoted Paul before his execution in 1581, as Munday himself reports: 'I am heere brought as a Spectacle, before the face of God, of Angelles and of men, satisfying my selfe to dye, as becommeth a true Christian and Catholique man'.[115] The verse was also cited by Robert Bellarmine, when he reproved Archpriest Blackwell for taking the Oath of Allegiance in 1607 and invoked More and Fisher as models to be imitated by English Catholics.[116] Martyrdom is thus not a solitary affair between the martyr, the persecutor, and God. Especially at the nexus of treason and religious dissent in early modern England, it was, as Lake and Questier note, 'an essentially theatrical process whereby the state's victims sought to appropriate and appeal to the judicial procedures and audiences through and before which the regime was trying to turn them into traitors'.[117] The performative aspects of early modern martyrdom did not taint its authenticity; on the contrary, they established its authenticity in the first place.

In the confessional polemics of the late sixteenth century, the meaning of martyrdom as a spectacle was controversial and subject to scepticism. While for one party the martyr's steadfast death may be a revelation of divine support, which amounted to an authentification of her or his cause, the other party may denounce it as a false show of martyrdom. Among the authors of *Sir Thomas More*, Munday in particular had seen his fair share of priests being executed. He was accordingly well-versed in the histrionics of martyrdom and the manner in which the martyr's heroic display of fortitude could be punctured with a critical gaze.[118] However, none of this polemical scepticism is apparent in the representation of More's martyrdom. This is all the more remarkable since the play warns repeatedly against the deceptiveness of appearances.[119] The seeming incongruence

[115] Munday, *Discouerie* F8ir. The same words are also reported in the vindications of Campion ascribed to Alfield (B4v–C1r) and Allen (*Briefe historie* d1r).
[116] Quoted in *Large examination* c3v–c4r. [117] Lake and Questier, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat* 243.
[118] See, for example, Munday, *English Romayne Lyfe* 47; Munday, *Discouerie* F8v–G1v.
[119] See, for example, 3.1.40–1; 3.1.174–83; 3.2.274–7; 4.4.86.

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between this earlier scepticism and the relative ease with which More eventually employs the *theatrum mundi* topos later on might be explained by the collaborative composition of the play, but does not entirely resist coherent interpretation either. As More's approach to the oath suggests, the only form of secrecy or dissimulation that is ethically legitimate is silence. As More's earlier exchange of identities with his servant suggests, it is also the only form that might successfully deceive its victim: 'beware / You talk not overmuch, for 'twill betray thee. / Who prates not much seems wise, his wit few scan, / While the tongue blabs tales of the imperfect man' (3.1.36–9). Hiding one's true self works best if one does exactly nothing, that is, if one refuses to perform and remains silent. The idea is Biblical: 'Euen a foole (when he holdeth his peace) is counted wise, and he that stoppeth his lippes, prudent' (Prov. 17:28). For once, the playwrights fail to make explicit the implied pun on More's name (Gk. *moros* = fool), which would have highlighted that More eventually tries to live by his own advice when he refuses to declare himself on the King's divorce: 'beware / You talk not overmuch, for 'twill betray thee'.[120]

However, when More/*moros* can no longer remain silent, '[t]he fool of flesh must with her frail life die' (5.4.116). As More implies with the Biblical echoes in his anticipation of his own death, martyrdom in turn reveals the 'fooles for Christs sake' (1 Cor. 4:10), which brings us back once again to the metaphysical anchoring of More's identity in God. As Paul informs us in the preceding verse, the 'fooles for Christ sake' are none other but 'the laste Apostles, as men appointed to death', who 'are made a gasing stocke vnto the worlde, and to the Angels, and to men' (1 Cor. 4:9). The foolish wisdom of the flesh may seek refuge in silence, but the wise folly of Christ is a spectacle for all to see. The play does not condemn the former – at least as long as it can be maintained in the face of aggressive attempts to penetrate its silence. Unlike Falstaff's dissimulation, however, it is decidedly untheatrical and marked by a refusal to perform. By contrast, the fool in Christ, who testifies to the truth of the Gospel with his martyrdom, plays a scripted role on the scaffold. Rather counter-intuitively, then, it is not the refusal to perform that is a sign of authenticity. On the contrary, it is by taking one's part in the *theatrum mundi* that the individual self reconnects to an overarching, divine order of being. This, after all, is what the Catholic martyrs did by inscribing themselves into the Pauline text.

[120] Arguably the most prominent instance of the More/*moros* pun is offered by Erasmus in his dedication of *Praise of Folly* to More (CWE 27:83–5).

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As I have argued in this chapter, *Sir Thomas More* reflects the increasing persecution of religious dissenters in the 1580s and 1590s, especially the increasing intolerance for and incrimination of silence. As the play suggests, this endeavour to make windows into men's hearts, the pressure to align one's words with one's thoughts, leads to a crisis of loyalty on the part of religious dissenters and collapses the *politique* distinction between private dissent and seditious agitation. Unlike Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays or *Sir John Oldcastle*, however, *Sir Thomas More* associates theatricality not with hypocrisy but, on the contrary, with an authentic performance of religious identity that culminates in the testimony of martyrdom. In the following chapter, I will further build on these insights in my reading of *Sejanus His Fall*, written by Jonson during his Catholic years. Like *Sir Thomas More*, *Sejanus* can be read as a response to the intense persecution of English Catholics during the late Elizabethan period and will offer an opportunity to deepen the discussion of the rhetorical, ethical, and political aspects of religious dissent under a regime that does not accept silence.

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CHAPTER 5

# *Free Speech and Neo-Stoicist Inwardness*
## *The Divided Self in Ben Jonson's* Sejanus His Fall

Ben Jonson's *Sejanus His Fall* probably premiered in May 1603 and was printed in a revised version in autumn 1605.[1] Jonson's Roman tragedy is a deeply researched study of the political culture of Imperial Rome and painstakingly follows the historical record in its portrayal of the Emperor Tiberius and the rise and fall of his favourite Sejanus. However, the play is also a product of the transition from the Tudor to the Stuart dynasty with all its hopes, fears, and insecurities, especially with regard to the new monarch's religious policies, which were of great concern to Catholics like Jonson. As is often overlooked, the political crisis depicted in Jonson's play mirrors the issue of the royal succession, which inspired so much animosity between the different confessional parties in late Elizabethan England. Thus, Sejanus, who craves the throne for himself, turns the aging Emperor against the heirs of Germanicus, the adopted son of Tiberius, who 'were next in hope for the succession', as Jonson writes in the 'argument' to his play.[2] It is for this reason that Sejanus persuades the Emperor to take action against the supposedly treasonous Germanicans, so named after the head of the family, who has already died at the beginning of the play. Notably, the persecuted Germanicans bear remarkable similarities to late Elizabethan Catholics, which makes *Sejanus* a highly topical

[1] For the dates, I am following Tom Cain's introduction (CEWBJ 2:199–200). According to the folio title page, the play was 'Acted, in the yeere 1603' (*Workes* 355). Cain rejects the assumption of earlier editors that this may refer to the Christmas season 1603/4 and, owing to plague-related closures of the theatres, narrows the first performance down to the week between 9 and 16 May 1603. *Sejanus* was entered in the Stationers' Register in November 1604. As for the revisions in the 1605 quarto, Jonson declares in his epistle to the readers that 'this book, in all numbers, is not the same with that which was acted on the public stage, wherein a second pen had good share; in place of which I have rather chosen to put weaker (and no doubt less pleasing) of mine own, than to defraud so happy a genius of his right by my loathed usurpation' (CEWBJ 2:215, ll. 31–5). As for the identity of this 'second pen', the play's most recent editor favours George Chapman (Cain, CEWBJ 2:198). However, the *Authorship Companion* to the New Oxford Shakespeare revives the case for Shakespeare. See Taylor and Loughnane 538–42.

[2] CEWBJ 2:229, ll. 13–14; compare with Tacitus, *Annals* 4.12.



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play in the context of the Elizabethan succession and the religious politics surrounding it.

Like *Sir Thomas More*, *Sejanus* is deeply concerned with the legitimate boundaries between privacy and the state's claim to transparency as well as the ethical and political implications of silence and dissimulation. It has been argued that Jonson's middle plays, from *Sejanus His Fall* to *Bartholomew Fair*, 'reveal a common concern with the dark side of intrigue'.[3] However, *Sejanus* not only excoriates the secret machinations of its Machiavellian villains but is simultaneously concerned with the erosion of secrecy, the only refuge left to the Germanicans. Jonson's Roman tragedy explores the ethical and political implications of secrecy and dissimulation not primarily in theological categories, as is the case with many of the plays discussed in this book, including Jonson's later comedy *Bartholomew Fair*; rather, it addresses the issue of the divided self from the perspective of rhetoric, notably the potential for dissimulation inherent in classical interpretations of free speech, and the perspective of neo-Stoicist moral and political philosophy. This apparent secular turn is arguably owed not only to Jonson's historicism in his Roman tragedies but also to the threat of censorship and penal repercussions that loomed over *Sejanus* as much as over *Sir Thomas More*. Nonetheless, this chapter aims to demonstrate that *Sejanus* explores ethical and rhetorical rationales for dissimulation under a tyrannical regime while simultaneously expressing a critique of the persecution of inward dissent and the cynical instrumentalisation of treason charges, as was routinely voiced by Catholic polemicists from the late Elizabethan period. Finally, I will consider how Jonson's conflicted views on dissimulation are reflected in the status of *Sejanus* as a play and the political and ethical dangers which Jonson perceived in the medium in which he decided to write. First, however, some remarks on Catholic views on the succession of James I as well as the tumultuous first year of his reign, which were marked by the Gunpowder Plot and the seeming failure of the King's initial attempts to appease his new Catholic subjects, will serve to stake out the religious and political parameters within which *Sejanus* could have gained topical meaning.

## The Succession Crisis and Jacobean Legislation of Catholic Dissent

Catholics had lived through one of their worst periods of persecution in England during the last two decades of Elizabeth's reign, but the prospect of a new monarch inspired hopes for a fresh start. Catholic loyalists such as

[3] Slights 12.

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William Watson, for instance, lobbied for a *politique* form of toleration and held up Henri IV's successful pacification of war-torn France as a model to be imitated by Elizabeth's successor.[4] Even as late as in summer 1603, the Jesuit William Wright still believed that James would pursue an approach similar to Henri's *politique* solution to the Wars of Religion, the Edict of Nantes (1598): 'It will come to pass that we in England shall have a toleration as the Huguenots have in France'.[5] Elizabeth's failure to produce an heir had made the succession an uncomfortably open question. However, as Wright's brother, Thomas Wright, recognised, these uncertainties gave Catholics leverage in negotiating for toleration: 'because it is very uncertain who succeeds . . . [E]very one of the pretenders will try all ways to bring the catholics to their sides. Which certainly they will never perform, unless faith be given that they will permit the catholic religion'.[6] The Earl of Northumberland accordingly pointed out to James that 'it weare pittie to losse so good a kingdome for the not tolerating a messe in a cornere (if wppon that it resteth)',[7] and James responded on 24 March, Elizabeth's dying day, that he would not 'persecute any that will be quiet and give but an outward obedience to the law'.[8] William Wright's hopes for a *politique* form of toleration 'as the Huguenots have in France' were thus not entirely unfounded.[9]

However, the new monarch had to strike a delicate balance between endearing himself to his new Catholic subjects and proving his Reformed credentials to committed Protestants, who mostly regarded increasing toleration for England's Catholics with the greatest suspicion.[10] Even though James remitted recusancy fines on a grand scale during the first few months of his reign in England, he quickly reverted to previous measures of persecution. In February 1604, Jesuits and seminaries were banned from England, the first Catholics were executed in July, and recusancy fees were re-imposed in November.[11] Especially the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 was grist to the mill of those who called for a more stringent suppression of Catholicism. Whereas James had magnanimously denounced suspicion as 'the Tyrants sickenesse' in his *Basilikon Doron* (1603),[12] he was forced to retract such insouciant sentiments after the discovery of the Plot in his address to Parliament on 9 November: 'For as I euer did hold Suspition to be the sicknes of

[4] Lake and Questier, *All Hail to the Archpriest* 224–7. [5] Quoted in Fraser 64.
[6] Quoted in Strype 3–2:593. [7] James Stuart, *Correspondence of King James VI* 56.
[8] James Stuart, *Letters* 207.
[9] For James' wooing of his Catholic subjects, see also Questier, *Dynastic Politics* 265–77.
[10] On this point, see especially Watkins. [11] Coffey 117. [12] James Stuart, *Political Works* 42.

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a Tyrant, so was I farre vpon the other extremity, as I rather contemned all aduertisements, or apprehensions of practises'.[13] While James had claimed to content himself with 'outward obedience' before his accession to the throne, Parliament subsequently passed, with the Oath of Allegiance, a tool that forced Catholics to align their conscience with their outward self.[14]

Jonson's cynical depiction of a tyrannical regime corrupted by flattery and dissimulation in *Sejanus* gains its semantic polyvalence from this precarious political climate at the onset of a new government, whose religious policies must have seemed unstable and contradictory and as yet defied confident prognostications for the future fate of English Catholicism. The play can be read as an indictment of the late Queen Elizabeth's persecution of Catholics. In a complementary reading, the play can also be understood, in its protest against corruption and tyranny, as an endorsement of James' political and ethical ideals in *Basilikon Doron* (1603) and the hopes which he inspired for greater tolerance for England's Catholic communities.[15] More antagonistically, however, the play could also be interpreted as a warning to the King not to repeat the mistakes of his predecessor and not to betray the principles set down in *Basilikon Doron*.[16] By the time *Sejanus* was printed, the play might even have been considered to express increasing discontent with James' failure to live up to Catholic expectations. In any case, *Sejanus* portrays a state in which the principle of outward conformity, in which Catholics could realistically have placed their hopes, gives way to tyranny and an aggressive intrusion into the inward self of political dissenters.

The timing of the play's publication was certainly unfortunate. Printing was probably concluded shortly after 5 November 1605,[17] coinciding with the final phase of the Gunpowder Plot. Jonson himself was implicated in the periphery of the Plot since he had attended a supper party on or around 9 October with Robert Catesby, Francis Tresham, Thomas Winter, and other members of the conspiracy.[18] As William Drummond further tells us, Jonson 'was called before the Council for his *Sejanus*, and accused both of popery and treason' by Henry Howard, Earl

[13] Ibid. 283.
[14] The Oath of Allegiance and its significance for Jonson's drama will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.
[15] For the parallels between the notions of good governance in *Sejanus* and *Basilikon Doron*, see Evans, '*Sejanus*'.
[16] For the rhetorical strategy of invoking *Basilikon Doron* as a means of counselling or even criticising King James, see Rickard 19–55.
[17] Cain, CEWBJ 2:201. [18] Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 217–18.

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of Northampton.[19] However, the exact reason for the complaint is a matter of speculation, and we do not know when exactly Jonson was called before the Council.[20] At any rate, the accusation seems to have had no substantial consequences – unlike *Eastward Ho!*, for which Jonson and Chapman had been imprisoned in summer 1605.

Jonson was given an opportunity to prove his loyalty immediately after the Plot had been discovered. He received a warrant from the Privy Council on 7 November to contact a certain priest, perhaps the aforementioned Thomas Wright, and to request him to appear before the Council.[21] In his letter to Robert Cecil from 8 November, Jonson confesses his inability to find the priest in question.[22] However, as Martin and Finnis observe, '[s]ubstituting professions of zeal and opinions for hard facts, the letter reveals no information about anyone' (n. pag.). The letter's actual obscurity thus stands in contradiction to Jonson's ostensible rhetoric of disclosure: 'For myself, if I had been a priest, I would have put on wings to such an occasion, and have thought it no adventure, where I might have done – besides His Majesty, and my country – all Christianity so good service'.[23] The purpose of calling the priest was, as a Catholic writer remembered sixteen years later, to convince Guy Fawkes that 'he was bound in conscience to vtter what he could of that conspiracie'.[24] In the end, however, the Privy Council could make do without Wright's persuasion. When Wright finally showed up, '*Fauxe* had confessed all they could wish before he could come vnto him'.[25]

Jonson's metaphor ('put on wings to such an occasion') is presumably a deliberate allusion to a frequently quoted, Biblical condemnation of treason: 'Curse not the King, no not in thy thoght, nether curse the riche in thy bed chamber: for the foule of the heauen shal cary the voice, & that

[19] *Informations*, CEWBJ 5:375, ll. 251–2.

[20] In the light of the praise that Chapman still lavishes on Howard in his commendatory poem for the play ('In *Sejanum*', CEWBJ 2:222, ll. 144–5), Richard Dutton suggests that the accusation of 'popery and treason' was related to the printed text in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, and not to the earlier performance of the play (*Mastering the Revels* 12).

[21] Jonson contributed commendatory verses to the second edition of Wright's *Passions of the minde in generall* (1604). Wright, who had already converted William Alabaster in 1597, was probably also responsible for Jonson's conversion to Catholicism while he was imprisoned in Newgate in 1598. See Stroud, 'Ben Jonson and Father Thomas Wright'. On Jonson's conversion, see also Crowley. The unnamed priest in the Privy Council warrant is identified as Wright by Frances Teague. However, Patrick Martin and John Finnis suggest that Wright may only have been the second choice and that the priest whom the councillors were originally looking for was the Jesuit Thomas Strange.

[22] 'Letter 9, to Robert Cecil, first Earl of Salisbury' (CEWBJ 2:655–6). The warrant itself is printed in HSS 1:203.

[23] CEWBJ 2:656, ll. 18–21. [24] Broughton 59. [25] Ibid.

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which hathe wings, shal declare the matter' (Eccles. 10:2).[26] There is no privacy when it comes to treason, not even freedom of thought. Jonson's willingness to 'put on wings' to such an occasion, that is, the confession of Guy Fawkes, shows him to be complicit in the government's invasion into the subjects' inner lives – at least in the case of treason. At the same time, however, the letter can be read as the deliberate exercise in obfuscation of a fence-sitter with divided loyalties. Jonson's case is thus symptomatic of a situation in which many Catholic loyalists found themselves in the heated climate of persecution, conspiracy, and precarious prospects for toleration during the transition from Tudor to Jacobean rule.[27]

Jonson's attempt to position himself as a loyal subject of the Crown in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot is undermined by *Sejanus*, which offers a far more cynical assessment of treason charges as a political tool of persecution. In the 'argument', which was perhaps inserted only after the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot,[28] Jonson advertises *Sejanus* 'as a mark of terror to all traitors and treasons, to show how just the heavens are in pouring and thundering down a weighty vengeance on their unnatural intents'.[29] However, while such protestations might put Jonson on the right side of history, the sentiment is patently absurd in the light of the much murkier politics of the play. In *Sejanus*, treason is '[t]he complement of all accusings . . . [t]hat / Will hit, when all else fails' (4.343–4),[30] and such observations closely mirror the polemical writings of Catholic polemicists from the two previous decades. For instance, in his reply to Cecil's *Execution of Justice in England*, William Allen observes that Catholics are 'condemned and put to death ether without al lawe, or els onelie vpon new lawes by which matter of religion is made treason'.[31] Similarly, Thomas Fitzherbert, who had been tenuously implicated in the Squire Plot in 1598, generalises in almost Foxean fashion that 'all persecutours haue sought to couer their persecutions with the cloke of treason'.[32] Jonson's play reproduces such complaints and can therefore, like *Sir John Oldcastle*, be read as an oppositional play to the extent that it critically interrogates discourses of treason and their political instrumentalisation by a persecutory regime.

[26] The Biblical verse is prominently cited in *The Book of Homilies*, in 'An exhortation to obedience' (*Certayne sermons* S2r–v) in the first volume as well as the 'Homilee agaynst disobedience and wylful rebellion', which had been added to the second edition (1571) of the second volume after the Northern Rebellion (*Second Tome of Homilees* 585).

[27] For Jonson's difficult navigation of his conflicts of loyalty as a Catholic more generally, see Donaldson, *Jonson's Magic Houses* 47–65. For a more literary perspective on the dynamics of concealment and revelation in Jonson's middle plays, see Slights.

[28] Cain, 'Jonson's Humanist Tragedies' 171. [29] CEWBJ 2:229, ll. 30–3. [30] Ibid. 2:338.

[31] Allen, *Modest defence* B1v. [32] Fitzherbert, 'Apology' F2v.

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While recent critics have mostly refrained from drawing one-to-one parallels between the play's characters and historical persons, *Sejanus* may nonetheless deliberately offer what Matthew H. Wikander has called 'flashes of recognition' between Tiberius and Elizabeth or James,[33] between the fall of Sejanus or Germanicus and the Earl of Essex, between Agrippina and Mary Stuart, or between the treason trial of Silius and that of Walter Raleigh. However, some of these parallels are plurivalent, difficult to sustain consistently, and sometimes mutually exclusive.[34] Rather than focusing on concrete historical events and persons, my historicist reading of *Sejanus* will therefore be grounded in intellectual history and the play's treatment of the rhetorical, ethical, and political discourses that had gained considerable urgency during the late sixteenth-century persecution of English Catholics and informed the hopes and fears of Catholics as they looked into an uncertain future.[35]

## *Parrhesia*: Secrecy and the Rhetoric of Free Speech

Paradoxically, the persecuted Germanicans discuss the issue of dissimulation primarily in relation to the issue of free speech. Although it has been argued that '[f]or Jonson such freedom is the first essential of a healthy state',[36] its rhetorical premises have received remarkably little attention in scholarship on *Sejanus*. I suggest that the Germanicans' disagreement on the ethics of dissimulation is owed to differing interpretations of *parrhesia*, the rhetorical figure of free speech. Initially, the Germanicans pride themselves on their honesty, which sets them apart from a court infested with flattery and dissimulation. As one of them, Sabinus, declares at the beginning of the play, we 'have no shift of faces, no cleft tongues' (1.7–9), 'we burn with no black secrets' (1.15).[37] Agrippina, the widow of Germanicus, similarly insists that she has nothing to hide: 'had Sejanus both his ears as long / As to my inmost closet, I would hate / To whisper any thought' (2.453–5).[38] Already by act 2, however, most of the Germanicans have adapted to the world of courtly intrigue and espionage. As one of Sejanus' spies notes: 'They all lock up themselves a'late, / Or talk in character. I have not seen / A company so

[33] Wikander, '"Queasy to Be Touched"' 346.
[34] See ibid. Convincing arguments for the deliberate complication of allegorical interpretations in *Sejanus*, perhaps as a strategy of self-protection on Jonson's part, are also made in Lake, 'From *Leicester His Commonwealth*' 130–3; Cain, 'Jonson's Humanist Tragedies' 174–5.
[35] For the critical consensus on a Catholic context for the play, see, for example, Lenthe; Lake, 'From *Leicester His Commonwealth*'. See also Cain, CEWBJ 2:202–6; Butler, 'Ben Jonson's Catholicism' 199–201; Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 186–92; Miola 102; Kelly, 'Ben Jonson's Politics' 209–10.
[36] Cain, 'Jonson's Humanist Tragedies' 176. [37] CEWBJ 2:236. [38] Ibid. 2:287–8.

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changed' (2.333–5).[39] It is under the pressure of constant surveillance that the Germanicans are driven to secrecy in the first place. They are 'grown exceeding circumspect and wary' (2.405), their voices are '[h]ushed' and '[d]rowned in their bellies' (4.351–2).[40]

This conflict between an ideal of frankness and honesty on the one hand and the political necessity for secrecy on the other is the subject of disagreement among the Germanicans themselves and manifests itself in a clash of different rhetorical conceptions of free speech. This becomes explicit for the first time in act 2, when the Germanican Silius tells Agrippina that his wife, Sosia, 'doth owe Your Grace / An honest but unprofitable love' (2.432–3).[41] Distinguishing between a 'moral' and a 'political sense' (2.435),[42] Silius elaborates:

> I meant, as she [i.e. Sosia] is bold, and free of speech,
> Earnest to utter what her zealous thought
> Travails withal, in honour of your house;
> Which act, as it is simply born in her,
> Partakes of love and honesty, but may,
> By th'over-often and unseasoned use,
> turn to your loss and danger – for your state
> Is waited on by envies, as by eyes;
> And every second guest your tables take
> Is a fee'd spy, t'observe who goes, who comes,
> What conference you have, with whom, where, when;
> What the discourse is, what the looks, the thoughts
> Of every person there, they do extract,
> And make into a substance.[43] (2.436–49)

Under the intense scrutiny of inimical spies, there is such a thing as 'over-often and unseasoned' honesty, which appears to be in conflict with Sosia's otherwise laudable habit of being 'bold, and free of speech'. Jonson thus draws attention to necessary qualifications of free speech under the conditions of persecution, a concern that is also apparent in early modern treatises on rhetoric.

According to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, '[i]t is Frankness of speech [*licentia*] when, talking before those to whom we owe reverence or fear, we yet exercise our right to speak out, because we seem justified in reprehending them, or persons dear to them, for some fault' (4.36).[44] In his frequently reprinted *Art of Rhetorique* (1553), Thomas Wilson defines *parrhesia* similarly: 'Freenesse of speech, is when we speake boldly

[39] Ibid. 2:282. [40] Ibid. 2:285, 339. [41] Ibid. 2:286. [42] Ibid. [43] Ibid.
[44] On *parrhesia* in classical rhetoric and its early modern reception, see Colclough, especially ch. 1.

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and without feare, euen to the proudest of them, whatsoeuer we please or haue list to speake'.[45] However, Wilson had to learn that such *parrhesia* is difficult to sustain in an age of religious persecution. In the prologue to the second edition of his *Art of Rhetorique* (1560), the later privy counsellor tells us that in his exile during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary, he was brought to trial in Rome on charges of heresy.[46] As Wilson reports, 'I tooke such courage, and was so bolde, that the Iudges then did much maruaile at my stoutnesse'.[47] Still, he soon realised that inconsiderate *parrhesia* undermined his position: '[My judges] told me plainly, that I was in farther perill, then wherof I was aware, and sought thereupon to take aduauntage of my words, and to bring me in daunger by all meanes possible'.[48] *Parrhesia* should therefore by no means be confused with recklessness: 'I was as ware as I could bee, not to vtter any thing for mine owne harme, for feare I shoulde come in their daunger. For then either should I haue dyed, or else haue denyed both openly and shamefully, the knowne trueth of Christ and his Gospell'.[49] As Wilson makes clear, there are grey areas between complete sincerity and denying Christ. The parrhesiastic imperative to confess Christ openly may need to be tempered with prudential considerations.

*Parrhesia* is not simply a stylistic device; it is also a type of communication with a specific political function. In his essay on 'How to Tell a Flatterer From a Friend', Plutarch associates *parrhesia* with honest advice as opposed to flattery. As a means of speaking truth to power, it became a central concept for early modern understandings of free speech. In *Sejanus*, it is Arruntius who most consciously adopts the role of the Plutarchian *parrhesiastes*.[50] When Arruntius fantasises about dismembering Sejanus,

[45] Wilson, *Art of Rhetorique* 203.

[46] Ibid. A4v. Wilson, who would later demonstrate his own officiousness in interrogating Catholics, had first joined the English community at the University of Padua and subsequently moved to Rome on legal business. In 1558, Wilson was denounced to the Inquisition as a heretic, possibly by Cardinal Reginald Pole, and was tortured and imprisoned until he escaped when a Roman crowd burnt down the prison on via Ripetta after the death of Paul IV on 18 August 1559. See Doran and Woolfson.

[47] Wilson, *Art of Rhetorique* A5r. [48] Ibid. A5r. [49] Ibid. A5r.

[50] Compare with Ceron. For the question of whether Arruntius' cynical running commentary is indeed an instance of *parrhesia* or rather a series of asides, and the manner in which modern editions have dealt with this question, see Geng. As Geng concludes, the tendency of modern editors to increase the number of asides is warranted neither by the evidence of the quarto or folio edition of the play nor by the reaction of other characters to Arruntius' loose tongue, as the following discussion of Arruntius will demonstrate as well. In '"[P]lain and passive fortitude"', Smith goes even further and argues that Arruntius' verbal interventions are crucial to the formation of a discourse of resistance in the play.

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Sabinus warns him: 'You are observed, Arruntius' (1.258), to which the latter simply replies: 'Death! I dare tell him so, and all his spies' (1.259).[51] Friends repeatedly tell Arruntius to stop talking (1.541, 1.547, 4.435),[52] but even the spies who are set on him realise that he simply cannot be bothered: 'And yet Arruntius / Cannot contain himself' (2.406–7).[53] When he decides to denounce the flattering 'palace-rats' (1.427) at the court to Tiberius,[54] Sabinus urges caution in the following terms:

> Stay, Arruntius,
> We must abide our opportunity,
> And practise what is fit, as what is needful.
> It is not safe t'enforce a sovereign's ear;
> Princes hear well, if they at all will hear.[55] (1.430–4)

Unlike Arruntius, Sabinus is aware of the importance of *decorum*, to 'practise what is fit' and to choose the right moment *(kairos)* in giving counsel. *Parrhesia* is thus not simply, as Wilson puts it, liberty to speak 'whatsoeuer we please or haue list to speake'.[56] When *decorum* is disregarded, Plutarch warns, *parrhesia* is bound to backfire: 'Failure to observe the proper occasion is in any case exceedingly harmful, but particularly when frankness is concerned it destroys its profitableness'.[57] In his discussion of *parrhesia* in *The garden of eloquence* (1577), Henry Peacham similarly warns that 'great warinesse must be vsed, least much boldnesse bringeth offence. And therefore the tyme, the place, and chiefly the persons, ought wel to be considered of'.[58] Jonson too later dealt with *parrhesia* in *Discoveries*, where he reproduces some of its classical qualifications. One should speak to a prince in a manner 'free from flattery or empire', but, like Plutarch,[59] Jonson couples *parrhesia* with *modestia*.[60] Arruntius, however, refuses to acknowledge that *parrhesia* is not simply sincere or unregulated speech but subject to rhetorical rules and conventions, if it is to have any persuasive effect at all.

The inefficiency of inconsiderate *parrhesia* is powerfully brought home in the fabricated treason trial of Silius, who uses the platform of the trial in order to castigate the Emperor's corruption and tyranny. Silius tells Tiberius that 'thy fraud is worse than violence' (3.209) and denounces the Emperor's 'Malicious and manifold applying, / Foul wrestling, and impossible construction' of the law (3.228–9).[61] But the prosecuter Afer gains the upper hand by dismissing this lack of civility as evidence for

[51] CEWBJ 2:250. [52] Ibid. 2:264, 264, 343. [53] Ibid. 2:285. [54] Ibid. 2:259. [55] Ibid.
[56] Wilson, *Art of Rhetorique* 203. [57] Plutarch, *Moralia* 68D. [58] Peacham M3r.
[59] CEWBJ 7:505, l. 78. Plutarch *Moralia* 66E. [60] CEWBJ 7:505, ll. 77–8. [61] Ibid. 2:300.

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Silius' agitated state of mind: 'He raves, he raves' (3.230).[62] Silius' protest is nothing but 'the common customs of thy blood / When it is high with wine, as now with rage' (3.270–1).[63] Finally, Silius stabs himself in a last attempt 'to mock Tiberius' tyranny' (3.338),[64] but even this last act of resistance proves a rhetorical failure, which inadvertently gives the Emperor the upper hand in interpreting the trial:

> We are not pleased in this sad accident,
> That thus hath stalled and abused our mercy,
> Intended to preserve thee, noble Roman,
> And to prevent thy hopes.[65] (3.344–7)

Instead of defying the Emperor with his suicide, Silius saves Tiberius the labour of having to bring the farcical treason trial to its bitter conclusion. The quick-witted Tiberius seizes the occasion to uphold a fiction of paternal care and benevolence by feigning sympathy and regret. Tiberius clearly imitates Caesar's reaction to Cato's death in Utica. According to Plutarch, Caesar said upon hearing the news of Cato's suicide: 'O Cato, I begrudge thee thy death; for thou didst begrudge me the sparing of thy life'.[66] The parallel between Cato and Silius is intriguing, not least because Cato offers a prominent precedent for the dangers of intemperate *parrhesia* and was discussed as such also in sixteenth-century England.

Cato's rigid moralism and failure to accommodate his rhetoric to the circumstances at hand were already controversial in antiquity. Cicero, who acquiesced with Caesar's regime and defended his refusal to imitate Cato's 'martyrdom for the Republic' in *De officiis* (see English translation *On Duties*, 1.31), observes in his *Letters to Atticus* that Cato is, as the early modern proverb goes, so good that he is good for nothing: 'The fact remains that with all his patriotism and integrity he is sometimes a political liability. He speaks in the Senate as though he were living in Plato's Republic instead of Romulus' cesspool'.[67] The contrast between Cicero's political and rhetorical flexibility and Cato's refusal to compromise continued to be cited throughout the sixteenth century. Jonson's contemporary Francis Bacon, for instance, similarly locates Cato's political failure in his refusal to temper *parrhesia* with

[62] Ibid. 2:301. [63] Ibid. 2:302. [64] Ibid. 2:305. [65] Ibid. 2:305–6.
[66] Plutarch, *Lives* 8:72. Chapman, who possibly collaborated with Jonson on *Sejanus*, cited this remark in his own tragedy *Caesar and Pompey*: '*O Cato*, I enuy thy death, since thou / Enuiedst my glory to preserue thy life' (K1v).
[67] Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 21.8.

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due regard to the given circumstances. In the chapter on 'Cassandra sive Parrhesia' in his mythographic study *De sapientia veterum* (1609), he cites Cicero's observation in the *Letters to Atticus* concerning Cato as an example of the failed *parrhesiastes*. Bacon may well have gleaned the example of Cato from Lipsius, who cites the same Ciceronian passage in his *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* when he criticises political advisers who are unwilling to use deceit.[68] In line with Lipsius, Bacon explains that the fable of the Trojan prophetess, who was condemned to tell the truth but never to be believed, 'seemes to intimate the vnprofitable liberty of vntimely admonitions and counselles'.[69] According to Bacon, inept counsellors cannot discern 'the due times when to speake and when to be silent . . . [I]n all their endeuours either of perswasion or perforce, they auaile nothing'.[70] In *Sejanus*, we might conclude, Silius pulls off a classic Cato – his resistance and suicide are morally admirable, but politically pointless. By unflinchingly speaking truth to power, Silius does not gain the upper hand but, on the contrary, yields control over the moral and political significance of his final acts and words to the Emperor.

Arruntius suffers from the same misunderstanding of free speech. In fact, he seems hostile to the very idea of rhetoric, as when he cannot think of a better insult for Sejanus' henchman Afer than to call him an 'orator', who 'hath phrases, figures, and fine flowers / To strew his rhetoric with' (2.418–20).[71] In his insistence on frankness, however, Arruntius fails to recognise that there is such a thing as a *rhetoric* of free speech, which may be nothing else but a studied pose of authenticity, carefully designed to achieve specific rhetorical effects. Quintilian points out that *parrhesia* would not be a figure of speech if it were nothing else but unregulated, sincere speech. Not only is *parrhesia* subject to *decorum*, it can also be 'feigned and artificially produced', and 'flattery is often concealed under this cover'.[72] In the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, *parrhesia* likewise does not preclude manipulation. *Parrhesia* may be 'mitigated by praise', and it can even be a form of 'pretence', that is, if it merely 'assumes the guise of Frank Speech and is of itself agreeable to the hearer's frame of mind'.[73] As the classical teachers of rhetoric as well as Jonson and his contemporaries were well aware, truth cannot do without rhetoric, and free speech may even be *nothing else* but rhetoric.

[68] Lipsius, *Sixe bookes [Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex]* 112.
[69] Bacon, *De sapientia veterum* 2. [70] Ibid. 3. [71] CEWBJ 2:286. [72] Quintilian 9.27–8.
[73] *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.37.

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Free speech can thus be a form of dissimulation and a political instrument in its own right, not only for the adviser but also for the ruler. Bacon, for instance, notes in his essay 'Of Simulation and Dissimulation' that 'the ablest Men, that ever were, have had all an Opennesse, and Francknesse of dealing' that allowed them to cover their dissimulation all the more efficiently because 'the former Opinion, spred abroad of their good Faith, and Clearnesse of dealing, made them almost Invisible'.[74] In other words, there is no better camouflage for dissimulation than cultivating a reputation of sincerity. Such false frankness can even serve 'the better to discover the Minde of another. For to him that opens himselfe, Men will hardly shew themselves adverse; but will (faire) let him goe on, and turne their Freedome of Speech, to Freedome of thought'.[75] According to Tacitus, this was the strategy that Tiberius pursued with his initial, pseudo-republican deference to the senate: 'It was realized later that his coyness had been assumed with the further object of gaining an insight into the feelings of the aristocracy: for all the while he was distorting words and looks into crimes and storing them in his memory'.[76] Dissimulation thus again serves not only to conceal one's intentions but also to reveal the intentions of others. And, significantly, such dissimulation works best, as Bacon emphasises, if it operates under the guise of openness and frankness.

In Jonson's play, similar tactics are also employed by informers and agents provocateurs such as Latiaris, who succeeds in ensnaring the otherwise discreet Sabinus with a supposedly daring appeal to republican values and a parrhesiastic critique of Tiberius and Sejanus (4.115–217).[77] However, Bacon further argues in his essay that Tiberius committed a fatal error in making dissimulation a habit and therefore acquired a reputation for duplicity, which 'is a Hinderance, and a Poorenesse'.[78] In *Sejanus*, Tiberius is likewise past deceiving anybody with his posture of republican public-spiritedness. Nonetheless, Jonson's play shows how a tyrannical regime may deceptively use free speech for the purpose of suppressing dissent.

In addition, the play also offers a lucid analysis of how tyrants may instrumentalise the free speech of their critics and incorporate it into their own ideological fictions. Even though Arruntius never wonders what the effects of his parrhesiastic speech may be, just as he never wonders why he is

[74] OFB 15:20. [75] OFB 15:22.

[76] Tacitus 1.7. Tacitus further singles out as exemplary Tiberius' treatment of the traitor Libo Drusus: 'There was no estrangement on his brow, no hint of asperity in his speech: he had buried his anger far too deep. He could have checked every word and action of Libo: he preferred, however, to know them' (*Annals* 2.28).

[77] CEWBJ 2:328–32. [78] OFB 15:20.

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not dragged off-stage like his fellow-Germanicans, his words are not without consequences. As it turns out, Arruntius is deliberately left untouched. After the show trials in act 3, Sejanus advises Tiberius as follows:

> By any means preserve him. His frank tongue,
> Being lent the reins, will take away all thought
> Of malice in your course against the rest.
> We must keep him to stalk with.[79] (3.498–501)

If Arruntius is oblivious to the effects of his 'frank tongue', others are not. Letting him speak out lends Tiberius' regime a veneer of impartiality and liberty. Arruntius thus becomes an unwitting collaborator, the stalking horse of a mendacious and cynical regime of terror. As in the case of Silius, Arruntius' disregard of rhetorical conventions is therefore not empowering but rather amounts to a gratuitous renunciation of control over the meaning and impact of his own words. In *Sejanus*, free speech is incorporated into the machinations of the ruling clique, who enlist Arruntius' truth in the service of a political fiction of toleration in an exemplary instance of what Stephen Greenblatt has called containment of subversion.[80]

Upholding an illusion of free speech and liberty might even be characterised as the hallmark of Tiberius' political style. With regard to the libels written against him, Tiberius shows himself lenient and argues that they 'will, neglected, find their own grave quickly, whereas too sensibly acknowledged, it would make their obloquy ours. Nor do we desire their authors, though found, be censured, since in a free state (as ours) all men ought to enjoy both their minds and tongues free' (5.552–6).[81] Tiberius thus fashions his political image as a generous ruler who is above the animosities of his petty detractors in a manner that is disconcertingly close to Jonson's actual literary-political ideals.[82] However, the sheer scope of Tiberius' hypocrisy is evident from the fact that he is parroting an argument for free speech made by the historian Cordus, whom Tiberius and Sejanus had previously brought to trial on account of treasonous slander.[83] Cordus had defended his history of the

[79] CEWBJ 2:312. [80] Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* 21–65. [81] CEWBJ 2:376.

[82] For the same argumentation, see, for example, Jonson's epigram 30, 'To Person Guilty': 'Guilty, be wise; and though thou know'st the cries / Be thine I tax, yet do not own my rhymes: / 'Twere madness in thee to betray thy fame / And person to the world, ere I thy name' (CEWBJ 5:127, ll. 1–4). See also 'The Epistle' to *Volpone*, CEWBJ 3:29, ll. 42–5; *Discoveries*, CEWBJ 7:577–8, ll. 1634–63.

[83] For the technical aspects of the charge against Cordus, an application of the *lex maiestatis* to slanderous writing, which was punished by burning the books in question, see McHugh 393–4. Cordus' final fate is not quite clear. According to Tacitus, he starved himself to death (4.34), and Dio Cassius reports that he was forced to commit suicide (57.24.2). Jonson does not pursue his career any further than his trial.

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downfall of the Republic by pointing out that Tiberius' predecessor Augustus had tolerated even the railing epigrams of Bibaculus and Catullus: 'for such obloquies, / If they despisèd be, they die suppressed, / But if with rage acknowledged, they are confessed' (3.439–41).[84] Even though Cordus is evidently excluded from Tiberius' wish that 'all men ought to enjoy both their minds and tongues free', his arguments nonetheless resurface in Tiberius' projection of his own image as a liberal and tolerant ruler. Notably, the close argumentative parallels, that is, the merits of ignoring slander as means of proving one's innocence, and verbal parallels ('obloquy', 'acknowledge') between Tiberius and Cordus are not to be found in the sources.[85] Jonson thus consciously highlights the Emperor's hypocritical appropriation of the rhetoric of free speech of his political enemies for his own mendacious purposes.

To be sure, in line with Bacon's assessment of Tiberius' unseasoned use of dissimulation, the Emperor's claim to *parrhesia* eventually degenerates into a perfectly transparent façade in Jonson's play. However, the fact that Tiberius' ideological fictions remain largely unchallenged attests all the more impressively to the sway which the Emperor holds over his subjects. This fiction of free speech is also maintained when the Senate session in act 5 is opened by the consul Memmius Regulus with the following appeal: 'And thou, Apollo, in whose holy house / We here are met, inspire us all with truth, / And liberty of censure, to our thought' (5.523–5).[86] However, the truth to be determined in that session, namely, that Sejanus is a traitor to the state, is not inspired by Apollo but by the well-timed entry of guards (5.612) and a gentle nudge in the right direction by Macro, the Emperor's new favourite (5.663–6).[87]

[84] CEWBJ 2:310.

[85] The letter which in Jonson's play contains Tiberius' advocacy of free speech is not recorded in the *Annals*, where it would have been part of the lost sections from books 5 and 6. Dio Cassius' summary of the letter (58.10.1–5) does not mention free speech, which suggests that Jonson himself is responsible for the addition of the issue of free speech. Next to the second sentence of Tiberius' argument ('Nor do we desire their authors, though found, be censured, since in a free state (as ours) all men ought to enjoy both their minds and tongues free'), Jonson provides a marginal reference to chapter 28 of Suetonius' biography of Tiberius, according to which Tiberius claimed that 'in a free country there should be free speech and free thought' (Suetonius, 'Tiberius', *Lives of the Caesars* 28). In Suetonius, however, the principle is not related to the letter which Tiberius sent to the Senate. Moreover, Jonson himself has added the first sentence ('[libels] neglected, find their own grave quickly whereas too sensibly acknowledged, it would make their obloquy ours'), which connects Tiberius' argument to Cordus in the first place and thus highlights the Emperor's hypocrisy.

[86] CEWBJ 2:375.

[87] Ibid. 2:379, 381. Blair Worden (85–6) has suggested that Jonson's cynical portrayal of the Senate's deliberations might be related to the endeavours in the 1590s to restrict free speech in parliament, on which I have already touched in Chapter 3. In addition, questions on the status of free speech were also pressing in James' first parliament (1604–10). See Colclough 138–59.

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As Jonson shows in *Sejanus*, *parrhesia* is by no means simply to be equated with honesty or straightforwardly speaking truth to power. As a rhetorical figure, it is subject to *decorum*, and it is to be tempered according to the circumstances at hand in order to achieve the desired rhetorical effects. As such, it provides a rationale for compromises between an ideal of honesty and openness on the one hand and political prudence on the other. *Parrhesia* can even be instrumentalised by repressive regimes in order to uphold a political fiction of toleration. However, Jonson also draws on other resources in his reflections on dissimulation. Especially neo-Stoicist political theory and moral philosophy offer justifications of dissimulation that have not yet been fully recognised in scholarship on *Sejanus* and its religious politics.

## The Besieged Self: *Constantia* and Dissimulation

*Sejanus* can be read as a critical reflection on neo-Stoicist moral philosophy and political thought as represented by Justus Lipsius and his case for a *politique* form of toleration for private dissent. However, as I argue in the following, Tiberius and Sejanus routinely flout Lipsian principles of statecraft and thus forestall the possibility of a life of Stoicist self-sufficiency and inward sovereignty, which Lipsius recommends as a remedy against the calamities of civil war and tyranny. Like the protagonist of *Sir Thomas More*, some of the Germanicans decide to retreat from public life in order to save themselves, as Jonson highlights in the final debate between Arruntius and Lepidus, 'almost all the few / Left to be honest in these impious times' (4.278–9).[88] When Arruntius asks Lepidus what arts have preserved him untouched to this point, the latter replies:

> Arts, Arruntius?
> None but the plain and passive fortitude
> To suffer and be silent; never stretch
> These arms against the torrent; live at home,
> With my own thoughts, and innocence about me,
> Not tempting the wolf's jaws: these are my arts.[89] (4.293–8)

With his insistence on 'plain and passive fortitude' and his retreat into the privacy of his own mind, Lepidus taps into neo-Stoicist ideas and values.[90]

[88] CEWBJ 2:335. [89] Ibid. 2:336.

[90] Lepidus' Stoicism has been noticed, for example by Burgess, '"Historical Turn"' 39–43, and Geng 128, but its full political implications with regard to *politique* approaches to religious toleration have not yet been explored. For a general overview of the Stoicist conception of constancy and its sixteenth-century reception, which will be the focus of my discussion, see Lagrée.

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Such political quietism, as propagated by Guillaume du Vair, Michel de Montaigne, and Justus Lipsius, had become increasingly attractive when civil society and political institutions were brought to the brink of collapse in the French and Dutch civil wars. As has been less noticed, the neo-Stoicist virtue of constancy also offered a justification of Nicodemism with its distinction between inward sovereignty and outward conformity.[91] However, Jonson offers a pessimistic appraisal of the viability of such a distinction under a persecutory regime that does not acknowledge any distinction between outward conformity and inward dissent.

The neo-Stoicist conception of constancy is predicated on a sharp division between the external blows of fortune and the onslaught of the passions on the one hand and what Lepidus calls 'my own thoughts, and innocence about me', the inviolable, inward realm of virtue, on the other. In *De constantia sapientis*, for instance, Seneca describes the virtue of the wise man as an impregnable fortress: 'The walls which guard the wise man are safe from both flame and assault, they provide no means of entrance, – are lofty, impregnable, godlike'.[92] True liberty accordingly consists in 'having a mind … that separates itself from all external things'.[93] This radical separation between inwardness and outwardness fell on fertile ground during the religious persecutions and civil wars of the sixteenth century. A case in point is Justus Lipsius' neo-Stoicist bestseller *De constantia in publicis malis* (1584), which he had written against the backdrop of the Eighty Years' War. In this short treatise in dialogue form, Lipsius defines constancy as '*an upright and unmoved vigor of mind that is neither uplifted nor cast down by outward or chance occurrences*'.[94] Only if one has recognised that desire and delight are based on false goods and that fear and sorrow are based on false evils is one 'truly a king, truly free … subject to God only, exempt from the yoke of Feeling and Fortune'.[95] Like Seneca, Lipsius envisages such inward integrity metaphorically in terms of armour and military fortification. In the dialogue, the youthful (and fictionalised) Lipsius laments that '[t]here is no steel around my heart',[96] and his interlocutor, Charles Langius, uses the same language with regard to the passions when he advises him to 'erect palisades and strongholds, and thus fortified [to] repulse the assaults of desire'.[97] Importantly, Stoicist constancy is thus a form of detachment and not a form of allegiance to any institutional, political, or social entity.[98] The Stoicist self is not a relational category that derives its identity from the various

[91] For an exception, see Zagorin 123. [92] Seneca, *Moral Essays* 6.8. [93] Ibid. 19.2.
[94] Lipsius, *Concerning Constancy [De constantia]* 1.4. [95] Ibid. 1.6. [96] Ibid. 1.1. [97] Ibid. 1.3.
[98] Compare with Langius' deconstruction of patriotic sentiment and public duty as a hypocritical cover for purely personal interests (1.8–11).

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social structures in which it is embedded. On the contrary, it is maintained, like a military fortress, *despite* social and political pressures and obligations.

The Stoicist conception of constancy is thus not simply the constancy of a martyr but could also license dissimulation. For instance, King James protests in *Basilikon Doron* that 'trew Constancie' has nothing to do with 'that Stoicke insensible stupiditie, wherewith many in our dayes, preassing to winne honour, in imitating that ancient sect, by their inconstant behauiour in their owne liues, belie their profession'.[99] The Edinburgh edition of *Basilikon Doron* from 1599 even specifies its target as 'that proud inconstant LIPSIVS', the period's most notorious serial convert, and 'his Constantia'.[100] Born a Catholic, Lipsius changed his faith with each of his academic advancements. In Lutheran Jena and Calvinist Leiden, he conformed to the local confession, only to complete the circle on the occasion of his return to Catholic Louvain.[101] The notion of constancy as a form of detachment that licenses dissimulation is also apparent in Lipsius' discussion of persecution in *De constantia*. There, Lipsius' interlocutor Langius denies that there can be such a thing as mental persecution (*interna oppressio*) in the first place:

> It seems to me that someone who thinks that the mind can be confined or constrained is ignorant of himself and of the mind's heavenly nature. No external force will ever make you will what you don't will, or think what you don't think . . . A tyrant can free it from the body, not dissolve the nature of the mind itself, which is pure, eternal, and fiery; which disdains every violent and external influence. But still, you may say, the mind cannot express its thought. So be it, but reins are placed on your tongue, then, not on your mind, and not on your judgments, but on your actions. (2.25)

Langius has clearly no qualms about differing in one's heart and tongue under a tyrannical regime or during civil wars. His argument sounds remarkably similar to Lipsius' justification of Nicodemism in *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex*, which I have already discussed in the Introduction to this book. The difference is that in *De constantia* Lipsius addresses the question of Nicodemism from the point of view of the subject rather than the magistrate, and from an ethical rather than a political perspective. Still, the same anthropological principle underlies Lipsius' argumentation in both cases, namely, the impossibility of constraining the mind to believe what it does not want to believe.[102]

[99] James Stuart, *Political Works* 41–2. [100] James Stuart, *Basilikon Doron* 117.

[101] On Lipsius' conversions, especially on the occasion of his return to Louvain, see Machielsen, 'Friendship and Religion'.

[102] Lipsius' account is consistent with a Christian tradition on the impossibility of constraining the will in matters of faith, which he cites explicitly in *Sixe bookes [Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex]*

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Lipsius was not alone in reviving Stoicist constancy in an age of religious strife and persecution. In his essay 'On Habit', Montaigne likewise licenses such a disjunction between inwardness and outwardness when he argues that 'it is his soul that a wise man should withdraw from the crowd, maintaining its power and freedom freely to make judgements, whilst externally accepting all received forms and fashions'.[103] Such words are particularly poignant when considering that Montaigne wrote the essay in the tumultuous aftermath of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre.[104] In effect, Montaigne makes a case for religious dissimulation when he declares that even though '[t]he government of a community' may have a rightful claim on 'our actions, efforts, wealth and life itself', it 'has no right to our thoughts'.[105] In his essay 'On Constancy', Montaigne further spells out the Nicodemite potential of Stoicist constancy: 'Resolution and constancy do not lay down as a law that we may not protect ourselves, as far as it lies in our power to do so, from the ills and misfortunes which threaten us'.[106] Even more, 'all honourable means of protecting oneself from evils are not only licit: they are laudable'.[107] Neo-Stoicist constancy does not have to be crowned with martyrdom or a noble suicide in the style of Cato (or, in the case of *Sejanus*, Silius), but is compatible with dissimulation as a means of avoiding persecution.[108]

in order to make the same point, and which I have already discussed in the Introduction. However, the Stoics also stressed that the ability to grant or withhold assent cannot be constrained by anyone else (Taylor, *Sources of the Self* 137). A noteworthy parallel to Lipsius' inward freedom is offered, for instance, in Epictetus' imagined confrontation between the tyrant and the Stoic sage: '"Tell your secrets". I say not a word; for this is under my control. "I will fetter you". What is that you say, man? fetter *me*? My leg you will fetter, but my moral purpose [*prohairesis*] not even Zeus himself has power to overcome' (1.1.23–4).

[103] Montaigne, *Essays* 133. [104] Skinner 2:281.

[105] Montaigne, *Essays* 133. For the same argument, see Charron, *De la sagesse* (1601), book 2, ch. 2. The scepticist bent of both Montaigne and Charron may be at odds with the systematic ambitions of neo-Stoicism, but the quietism of Pyrrhonic scepticism likewise supports an agenda of outward conformity. Despite – or rather because of – his corrosive attack on all dogmatic certainties, Sextus Empiricus recommends 'a life conformable to the customs of our country and its laws and institutions' (*Outlines* 8).

[106] Montaigne, *Essays* 47. [107] Ibid.

[108] For the central role of self-preservation in Stoicist ethics (of which suicide can, under certain conditions, paradoxically be an instance), see Sellars 107–9. Furthermore, Cato's example was by no means uncontroversial. Already Augustine had criticised Cato's suicide as a failure even in Stoicist terms since it was motivated not by 'self-respect guarding against dishonour, but weakness unable to bear adversity' (*City of God* 1.23). John Donne reproduces the argumentation in one of his *Paradoxes and Problems*, 'That only Cowards dare dye' (*Selected Prose* 15), as does Shakespeare's Brutus in *Julius Caesar*: 'I do find it cowardly and vile, / For fear of what might fall, so to prevent / The time of life' (5.1.103–5). Montaigne is less harsh, but likewise questions the exemplary character of Cato's suicide in his essay 'On Restraining Your Will' by characterising it as an exceptional course of action that is not necessarily to be imitated: 'Cato gave up for his country the most noble life there ever was; little men like us should flee farther from the storm; we should see that there are no pains to feel, no pains to endure, dodging blows, not parrying them' (*Essays* 1148).

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Jonson's familiarity with neo-Stoicism is well-documented.[109] In *Sejanus*, however, he dispels the Stoicist notion of inward freedom as a wishful fantasy that does not acknowledge how completely tyrants may hold sway, not only over their subjects' bodies but also over their minds. Arruntius is not unsympathetic to Lepidus' neo-Stoicism. However, he is fully aware that Tiberius and Sejanus do not respect any distinction between public and private dissent in their endeavour to root out the Germanicans. Lepidus' neo-Stoicist arts are, Arruntius argues, useless under such a tyrannical regime:

> I would begin to study 'em, if I thought
> They would secure me. May I pray to Jove
> In secret, and be safe? Ay, or aloud?
> With open wishes? So I do not mention
> Tiberius, or Sejanus? Yes, I must,
> If I speak out. 'Tis hard, that. May I think,
> And not be racked? What danger is't to dream?
> Talk in one's sleep? Or cough? Who knows the law?[110] (4.299–306)

As Arruntius observes, Tiberius and Sejanus have left no space for refuge: 'No place, no day, no hour, we see, is free – / not our religious and most sacred times – / From some one kind of cruelty' (4.312–14).[111] Especially Arruntius' fears that the tyrant's henchmen will pry into his secret prayers would have resonated with English Catholics, considering that even the clandestine celebration of the Mass had become a crime under Elizabeth and that Catholic prayer books and rosaries had been outlawed. Arruntius describes a political regime in which any space for private dissent has been similarly erased and Stoicist constancy is put under an increasing strain. The Germanicans are forced to resort to constant role-playing, which is a treacherous business and exacts a high psychological price, as Seneca makes clear in *De tranquillitate animi*:

> for it is torturous to be constantly watching oneself and be fearful of being caught out of our usual rôle. And we are never free from concern if we think that every time anyone looks at us he is always taking our measure; for many

[109] Several Lipsius volumes are attested in the remains of Jonson's library (nrs. 99–101 in McPherson), including the eight-volume set of Lipsius' *Opera omnia* (1614), the annotations of which are reproduced in Evans, *Jonson, Lipsius, and the Politics of Renaissance Stoicism* 153–338. It is likely, however, that already in the 1590s Jonson was familiar with the original writings by Lipsius, who had corresponded with Jonson's schoolmaster and later friend William Camden since 1586. See Cain, 'Jonson's Humanist Tragedies' 164. For Jonson's interest in neo-Stoicism and Justus Lipsius in particular, see further Evans, '*Sejanus*'; McCrea 138–70.

[110] CEWBJ 2:336. [111] Ibid. 2:337.

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> things happen that strip off our pretence against our will, and, though all this attention to self is successful, yet the life of those who live under a mask cannot be happy and without anxiety. (17.1)

The need for incessant self-monitoring and universal distrust have demoralised the Germanicans to such an extent that they have even begun to internalise Tiberius' apparatus of surveillance: 'May I think, / and not be racked? What danger is't to dream?' (4.304–5).[112] Lipsius' consolation for times of persecution, namely, that 'reins are placed on your tongue, then, not on your mind',[113] does not apply to *Sejanus*. There is no *ataraxia* for Arruntius, who is no longer able to cultivate a secret refuge from persecution even in his own mind.

While *politique* approaches to religious toleration usually recommended reticence in penalising private dissent, Sejanus and his henchmen entertain no such scruples. As Tacitus notes, for instance, with regard to Germanicus' son Nero, 'whether the boy spoke or held his peace, there was guilt in silence, guilt in speech'.[114] In *Sejanus,* Jonson likewise portrays a regime that does not care whether 'secret thoughtes' do, as Bacon puts it, 'overflowe into overte and expresse actes and affirmacions'.[115] Satrius, one of Sejanus' men, notes that Arruntius is 'not yet / Looked after; there are others more desired, / That are more silent' (2.407–9).[116] Arruntius, on the other hand, 'only talks' (2.299).[117] After the trials of Silius and Cordus, when Tiberius plans to eliminate the Germanicans one by one, he also takes aim at Gallus, noting that 'howe'er he flatter us, / His Heart we know' (3.493–4).[118] In *Sejanus*, there is no safety in either silence or conformity.

Even if one manages to keep silent, Tiberius does not hesitate to construe the inwardness which he cannot access otherwise by means of deliberate over- and misinterpretation. Arruntius' dismissal of Lepidus' practice of Stoicist constancy thus harks back to Silius' earlier complaint that '[o]ur looks are called to question, and our words, / How innocent soever, are made crimes' (1.67–8).[119] Like Arruntius, Silius is outraged that even his dreams are now subject to scrutiny: 'We shall not shortly dare to tell our dreams, / Or think, but 'twill be treason' (1.69–70).[120] This focus on the treasonous mind rather than the treasonous deed resonates, in an early modern context, with the potential for political repression inherent in the Edwardian treason statute from 1352, which remained 'at the heart of the Elizabethan treason

[112] Ibid. 2:336. [113] Lipsius, *Concerning Constancy [De constantia]* 2.25. [114] Tacitus 4.60.
[115] OFB 1:379–80. [116] CEWBJ 2:285. [117] Ibid. 2:280.
[118] Ibid. 2:312. For the conflict between Tiberius and Gallus, who had committed the unpardonable faux pas of taking the former's protestations of humility at face value, see Tacitus 1.12.
[119] CEWBJ 2:240. [120] Ibid.

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code'.[121] This statute defined treason as a distinctly inward crime, namely, '[w]hen a Man doth compass or imagine the Death of our Lord the King'.[122] As Jonson's play suggests, the (re)construction of the alleged traitor's inwardness is always subject to potential manipulation and therefore opens the door wide for the political abuse of treason charges.

Tiberius and Sejanus target not only supposedly treasonous words and thoughts but also treasonous deeds that have not (yet) taken place. When Sejanus persuades Tiberius that the Germanicans are planning a coup although there is no evidence for their treasonous intentions, he urges a pre-emptive strike against the Germanicans, noting that 'thunder speaks not till it hit' (2.205).[123] Even though '[t]he act's not known' (2.194), Sejanus insists that '[i]t is not safe the children draw long breath, / That are provoked by a parent's death' (2.198–9),[124] that is, as long as Germanicus' children are still able to avenge their father, who died under dubious circumstances (1.159–74).[125] With Sejanus' cynical plea for pre-emptive measures of repression, Jonson's play once more taps into late Elizabethan Catholic polemics. Cardinal Allen, for instance, claimed that corrupt politicians in the orbit of the Queen had construed – just as Sejanus does in Jonson's play – a 'fiction of conspiracie against the realme, or the person of the Princes' for the sole purpose of justifying the persecution of English Catholics, who allegedly wished for a regime change in England.[126]

Lacking actual evidence for treason, Sejanus' spies are eager to provoke the Germanicans to compromising words and actions. Already early in the play, Sabinus recounts several attempts to undermine Germanicus by means of 'put[ting] him out / in open act of treason' (1.171–2),[127] a strategy that Sejanus adopts as well. The world of *Sejanus* is a veritable minefield, riddled with agents provocateurs authorised by Sejanus (2.347–64),[128] including Postumus (2.339–41),[129] Afer (2.417–26),[130] Latiaris (4.93–232),[131] and Satrius and Natta (2.405–17, 2.462–9).[132] This ubiquity of agents provocateurs may well have recalled their role in the Elizabethan government's attempts to identify Catholic traitors, especially in the detection of the Babington Plot. Agents provocateurs played a key role in retrospective Catholic views of the plot, which had been engineered, as Catholic polemicists claimed, as a pretext for moving against the potential pretender Mary Stuart. According to Southwell's

[121] Bellamy 62. [122] SR 1:319–20. [123] CEWBJ 2:276. [124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid. 2:244. According to Tacitus, Tiberius feared Germanicus as a rival (*Annals* 1.7). After his untimely death, there were rumours that he had been poisoned (2.73), allegedly because of his ambition to restore the Republic (2.82).
[126] Allen, *Modest defence* A2r. [127] CEWBJ 2:244. [128] Ibid. 2:283. [129] Ibid. 2:282.
[130] Ibid. 2:286. [131] Ibid. 2:327–33. [132] Ibid. 2:285–6, 288.

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*Humble supplication* (1600), the plot 'was rather a snare to intrap them [i.e., the Catholic plotters], then any deuise of their owne, sith it was both plotted, furthered, and finished, by *S. Frauncis Walsingham*, & his other complices, who laied & hatched al the particulers thereof, as they thought it would best fall out to the discredit of Catholiks'.[133] As Southwell further notes, the notorious Robert Poley (who would later witness the death of Christopher Marlowe) 'was the chiefe instrument to contriue and prosecute the matter'.[134] Poley also makes an appearance in Jonson's epigram 101, 'Inviting a Friend to Supper', which bears a striking resemblance to Jonson's treatment of agents provocateurs in *Sejanus*:

> . . . we will have no Poley or Parrot by,
> Nor shall our cups make any guilty men:
> But, at our parting, we will be as when
> We innocently met. No simple word
> That shall be uttered at our mirthful board
> Shall make us sad next morning, or affright
> The liberty that we'll enjoy tonight.[135] (101.36–42)

*Sejanus* too portrays a world in which even the sacred bonds of hospitality are undermined by spies, who turn innocent conversation into treason. To be sure, Jonson is following his sources closely, but he has a chosen a scenario that bears considerable similarities, for instance, to Allen's complaint that Elizabeth was 'putting into [Catholics'] houses and chambers, traitors, spials, delators, and promoters, that take watche for her of all theire waies, wordes, & writinges'.[136] Agrippina's dinner guests are similarly beleaguered by spies whose attempts to compromise the Germanicans evoke the machinations of the likes of Poley:

> CORDUS. Did you observe
> How they inveighed 'gainst Caesar?
> ARRUNTIUS. Ay, baits, baits
> For us to bite at . . ..[137] (2.413–15)

In similar terms, Southwell writes in his account of the Babington Plot how Poley, the supreme fisher of men, was 'feeding the poore gentlemen with his masters baits' and 'suffered them like silly fishes to play themselues vppon the hooke, till they were throughly fastned, that then he might strike at his own pleasure, and be sure to draw them to a certaine

[133] Southwell, *Humble supplication* 31–2. [134] Ibid. 32. [135] CEWBJ 5:168.
[136] Allen, *Admonition* 15. [137] CEWBJ 2:286.

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destruction'.[138] For Allen and Southwell, Jonson's vision of free speech at the dinner table in epigram 101 was a utopian scenario, just as it is for the Germanicans in *Sejanus*. In Sejanus' eyes, even the company one keeps is sufficient proof of treason: 'Well, 'tis guilt enough, / Their often meeting' (2.341–2).[139] Also for Jonson, who had attended a supper party with key figures of the Gunpowder Plot, the notion that 'our cups make any guilty men' would have been a matter of life and death by the time that *Sejanus* went into print.[140] Unlike *Sir Thomas More*, *Sejanus* does not simply portray a crisis of loyalty that hinges on the difficulty of separating religious dissent from treason but further shows how the spectre of treason can be cynically exploited as a pretext for persecution. Driven by paranoia and the ruthless pursuit of power, Tiberius and Sejanus ride roughshod over the political principles of neo-Stoicism. As Jonson's play suggests, it does not matter what palisades one erects between one's private thoughts and one's public words and actions if a malevolent regime is willing to go to any lengths to ferret out one's most secret thoughts and even fabricate them, if necessary.

## The Spectacle of Tyranny

Jonson's ambivalence towards the stage is well-known. In his classic survey of Western anti-theatricality, Jonas Barish dedicates a whole chapter to Jonson, arguing that 'Jonson is not interested in vindicating his plays as theater, but in validating them as literature, as dramatic poems'.[141] Undoubtedly, this assessment also holds true for *Sejanus*, especially the 1605 quarto, which is a self-contained literary artefact that ostentatiously declares its independence from a performance context. Cygnus, presumably a pseudonym for Hugh Holland,[142] calls *Sejanus* a 'tragedy'[143] in his dedicatory poem ('To the Deserving Author') and praises Jonson as the model to be imitated by 'tragic writers' and 'tragedians'.[144] However, such designations do not single out Jonson as a man of the theatre. In what is the first instance of the word 'playwright' cited by the OED, Cygnus stresses the difference between Jonson and 'the crew / Of common playwrights'.[145] Rather than appealing to ordinary playgoers, Jonson presents *Sejanus* in the 1605 quarto in terms of contemporary historiographical trends. In his

[138] Southwell, *Humble supplication* 32. [139] CEWBJ 2:282.
[140] *Epigrams* 101.37, CEWBJ 5:168. [141] Barish 139. [142] Cain, CEWBJ 2:225.
[143] CEWBJ 2:225, ll. 5, 9, 14. [144] CEWBJ 2:225, ll. 11, 12.
[145] CEWBJ 2:225, ll. 6–7. For Jonson's own expression of contempt for 'playwrights', see also epigram 49, 'To Playwright' (CEWBJ 5:136).

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preface, Jonson names 'truth of argument' as one of the four 'offices of a tragic writer' ('To the Readers'),[146] by which he also means historical truth.[147] Tom Cain accordingly observes that in *Sejanus* 'Jonson is writing as a historian' and not just as a dramatist.[148] Jonson's painstaking documentation of his sources with copious annotations suggests as much.

As historical writing, *Sejanus* is undoubtedly indebted to the late sixteenth-century vogue of Tacitism.[149] Lipsius, who made his name as an editor and commentator of Tacitus, frequently quotes the Roman historian in his *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* and thus turned him into a significant contributor to a neo-Stoicist 'ideology of state building'.[150] In England, on the other hand, Tacitism was frequently – although not exclusively – a critical and oppositional attitude, famously associated with the Essex circle in the 1590s.[151] Tacitus also appealed to discontented English Catholics, who recognised their own situation in the historian's dissection of courts intrigues and his accounts of informers and espionage, which played such a prominent role in Elizabethan Catholic polemics.[152]

Jonson makes use of Tacitus' *Annals*, not only as a source but also as a model for writing history. As a historiographical method, Tacitism was often a form of political critique, dedicated to the discovery of hidden motives and causes, driven by the impulse 'to look beneath the surface of those incidents, trivial at the first inspection, which so often set in motion the great events of history'.[153] Malcolm Smuts accordingly notes that by 'exposing the ruthlessness of politics at the imperial court, normally hidden by dissimulation, lies and flattery', Tacitus 'became a surrogate for Machiavelli: a more respectable authority since, unlike the infamous Florentine, he did not advocate the amoral behaviour he described'.[154] Jonson too knew that Tacitus 'wrote the secrets of the council and senate'.[155] In *Sejanus*, such a historiographical project is attributed to the historian Cordus. Sejanus calls Cordus

[146] CEWBJ 2:213–14, ll. 13–14.
[147] Bryant. For Jonson's affinities with historical writing and familiarity with leading historians of the day, see also Worden.
[148] Cain, 'Jonson's Humanist Tragedies' 178.
[149] For a good overview of the early modern reception of Tacitus as a stylist, historian, moralist, and political thinker, see Burke.
[150] Salmon, 'Seneca and Tacitus' 187.
[151] See Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics'; Womersley, 'Sir John Hayward's Tacitism'; Salmon, 'Stoicism and Roman Examples'; Salmon, 'Seneca and Tacitus'. However, for the increasing awareness in recent scholarship of a more court-centred interest in Tacitus, as exemplified by Elizabeth's own translation of the *Annals*, see also Philo.
[152] Smuts, 'Varieties of Tacitism' 451–3.
[153] Tacitus 4.32.
[154] Smuts, 'Court-Centred Politics' 25.
[155] *Informations*, CEWBJ 5:367, l. 104.

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> . . . a most tart
> And bitter spirit, I hear, who, under colour
> Of praising those [i.e., Julius Caesar's republican opponents], doth tax the present state,
> Censures the men, the actions, leaves no trick,
> No practice unexamined, parallels
> The times, the governments . . ..[156] (2.306–11)

Besides examining the *arcana imperii*, Cordus' paralleling of past and present is another typically Tacitist trait of the 'politic history' that blossomed in late Elizabethan England.[157] In its commitment to penetrating the surfaces of political appearances, such a Tacitist analysis of history lends itself easily to anti-theatrical attitudes. Jonson's ambivalence towards the theatre thus manifests itself in his Tacitist poetics of disenchantment. In *Sejanus*, theatricality functions primarily as a metaphor for the ruthless dissimulation of a histrionic tyrant such as Tiberius.

As Rebecca W. Bushnell points out, the association of tyranny with hypocrisy and the theatre can be traced back as far as to Plato's *Republic*: 'The rejection of drama is inseparable from Plato's argument against tyranny, for the tyrant is described as a kind of actor, and the threat that tyranny poses is also the threat that drama poses'.[158] It is in *The Prince*, however, that Machiavelli asserted the histrionics of government in an unprecedented manner. A ruler does not necessarily have to practise the virtues commonly recommended in advice to princes, 'but he must certainly seem to'.[159] Hence, one of the key virtues of Machiavelli's prince is dissimulation: 'one must be a great feigner and dissembler. And men are so naive, and so much dominated by immediate needs, that a skilful deceiver always finds plenty of people who will let themselves be deceived'.[160] The most avid dissembler in *Sejanus* is undoubtedly Tiberius, who is singled out for 'the space, the space / Between the breast and lips – Tiberius' heart / Lies a thought farther than another man's' (3.96–8).[161] For Arruntius, Tiberius' dissimulation is inherently theatrical. When the trial of Silius begins, Arruntius describes its beginnings in theatrical terms: 'Now, Silius, guard thee. / The curtain's drawing. Afer advanceth' (3.153–4).[162] In the Globe performance, a curtain was presumably drawn back at this point in order to reveal Afer.[163] By explicitly drawing attention to the mechanics of theatrical representation,

[156] CEWBJ 2:281. [157] See Levy, 'Hayward, Daniel'. [158] Bushnell 18.
[159] Machiavelli, *Prince* 62; ch. 18. [160] Ibid. [161] CEWBJ 2:295. [162] Ibid. 2:297.
[163] For the sort of discovery space that may have been used in this scene, see Ichikawa 26.

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Arruntius makes clear that this is indeed what the audience will see in the impendent show trial of Silius – a mere piece of political theatre. The Tacitist historian aims to pierce this smokescreen of princely virtue, and this is exactly what Jonson delivers, when the audience witnesses secret soliloquies and backroom dealings, in which *realpolitik* is stripped of all pretence of virtue and justice. Notably, Jonson again marks such moments with meta-theatrical gestures. For instance, when Sejanus lectures the Emperor on the principles of Machiavellian realpolitik, he first responds with the usual pious platitudes, but eventually shows his true face: 'We can no longer / Keep on our mask to thee, our dear Sejanus' (2.278–9).[164] Throughout the play, Tiberius enacts a persona that has evidently little to do with his actual thoughts and desires.

In addition, Jonson portrays autocratic rule as theatrical insofar as the Senators are no longer participants in the political process of decision-making but mere spectators of Tiberius' intransparent political manoeuvres. They have nothing left to do but to flatter the Emperor and his favourites and are, as Arruntius suggests, reduced to the equivalent of a theatre audience: 'We, / That are the good-dull-noble lookers-on, / Are only called to keep the marble warm' (3.15–17).[165] Sejanus too describes the Senate as 'an idle looker-on' (5.257) that is nothing but a 'witness of my power' (5.258).[166] The theatricality of power in *Sejanus* thus expresses both the essential hypocrisy of tyranny as well as the passivity to which the Senate is reduced under tyranny.

Finally, Tiberius' rule is theatrical in a third way, namely, in the manner in which it affects its audience. Theatre (and literature more generally) as well as tyranny rely on the power of illusion, and both appeal, in Plato's view, to the lower part of the soul. If Plato identifies a ruler's failure to master their own passions as the source of tyranny,[167] mimetic poets are to be condemned, not least because they appeal to the passions. Thus, 'the poet who imitates implants a bad constitution in the soul of each individual' and 'destroys the rational part, just as when in the state someone betrays it by putting scoundrels in power and destroys the more civilized element'.[168] Drama wreaks havoc in the soul of the spectator just as the tyrant wreaks havoc in the commonwealth. In *Sejanus*, Jonson builds on such Platonic concerns when he suggests that the corrupting force of the theatre facilitates the exercise of tyranny. Jonson frequently characterises

[164] CEWBJ 2:279. [165] Ibid. 2:291. [166] Ibid. 2:361–2. [167] Bushnell 9–17.
[168] Plato, *Republic* 605B–C.

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theatre audiences as irrational, fickle, addicted to newness, and therefore liable to manipulation. In *Discoveries*, for instance, Jonson notes that 'we see it in fencers, in players, in poets, in preachers, in all where fame promiseth anything; so it be new, though never so naught and depraved, they run to it and are taken'.[169] Audience reaction can even be potentially violent. In his 'Ode to Himself', which Jonson prefixed to the quarto edition of *The New Inn* (1629), vulgar audiences '[r]un on and rage, sweat, censure, and condemn'.[170] In the folio dedication of *Sejanus* to Esmé Stuart, Jonson even parallels the reception of his play to the political violence which it depicts, when he complains that the play 'suffered no less violence from our people here than the subject of it did from the rage of the people of Rome'.[171]

This distrust in theatricality arguably accounts for the frequently voiced critique that *Sejanus* fails to engage its audiences emotionally. Arthur F. Marotti, for instance, considers the play a failed tragedy precisely because of its insistent self-reflexivity, which allegedly impedes 'those emotional-intellectual effects which culminate in tragic catharsis'.[172] However, Aristotelian catharsis is evidently at odds with the play's own ethical and poetological outlook. Neo-Stoicists had little interest in pity as an emotional investment in other people's lives. Lipsius, for instance, distinguishes between reprehensible pity (*miseratio*) and commendable mercy (*misericordia*). Pity 'must itself be rejected by a wise and constant man' because 'firmness and vigor of mind . . . are not attainable if he becomes dejected and withdrawn not only over his own sorrow, but that of someone else'. On the other hand, mercy, '*an inclination of the mind toward relieving the poverty or suffering of someone else*', does not require empathy. The truly merciful man does not share the grief of others, but comforts and supports them 'cautiously and discreetly, lest, as with contagious maladies, he catch the sickness of another'.[173] Emotional identification is thus to be avoided. Arruntius' final words in the play, when he reflects on the victims of Fortune, accordingly deter readers and spectators from empathising with the play's protagonist: '[H]e that lends you pity is not wise' (5.879).[174]

Far from effecting catharsis in a recognisably Aristotelian sense, Jonson suggests, the theatre undermines the rule of reason and unleashes passions that a shrewd politician might be able to turn to their own advantage. Sejanus accordingly warns Tiberius that the populist Germanicans will

[169] CEWBJ 7:514, ll. 293–5. [170] Ibid. 6:310, l. 9. [171] Ibid. 2:212, ll. 3–5. [172] Marotti 197.
[173] Lipsius, *Concerning Constancy [De constantia]* 1.12.
[174] CEWBJ 2:390. On the conspicuous absence of anything resembling Aristotelian catharsis in Jonson's conception of tragedy, see also Chetwynd; Nash 166–8.

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manipulate 'the rout, / That's still the friend of novelty' (2.235–6)[175] – an assessment of a populist style of politics that echoes Jonson's later complaint about the uncritical addiction of theatre audiences to innovation. Ironically, Tiberius applies the lesson learnt from this warning against Sejanus himself once he recognises the latter's ambition to become Emperor. As Marotti puts it, Tiberius 'stands behind the play's final two acts like the playwright hidden behind his creation' (214) as he manipulates the Senate and the people of Rome in order to turn them against Sejanus. The manner in which Tiberius engineers the downfall of his former favourite seems to follow a tragic script that aims for maximal dramatic effect. First, it seems that the Emperor intends to grant Sejanus the tribunicial power against all expectations. However, Arruntius entertains the possibility that Tiberius' favour may be deceptive and tries to make sense of it in terms of a tragic peripeteia, carefully crafted by the Emperor in order to leave a lasting impression: 'You will say / It is to make his [i.e., Sejanus'] fall more steep and grievous?' (5.441–2).[176]

Sejanus falls victim to a mob in the streets after Tiberius sends an ambiguous letter from Capri to Rome, which is read out in the Senate. As soon as the wind seems to turn against Sejanus, the Senators, who clustered around the '[w]orthy and great Sejanus' (5.505) only moments earlier,[177] begin to shift their places: 'Away! / Sit farther. / Let's remove' (5.604).[178] In their inconstancy and their lack of independent judgement, which make them such suitable accomplices for Tiberius' tyranny, the senators behave almost like the theatre audiences that Jonson so often tried to educate with such disappointing results. In 'The Induction on the Stage' for *Bartholomew Fair*, for instance, Jonson feels a need to insist 'that every man here exercise his own judgement, and not censure by contagion or upon trust from another's voice or face that sits by him' and 'that he be fixed and settled in his censure, that what he approves or not approves today he will do the same tomorrow'.[179] If the senators in *Sejanus* do not pass the test of Jonson's ideal theatre audience and therefore are complicit in Tiberius' theatre of tyranny, the mob in the street is no better and displays a similarly cynical indifference to actual facts:

> What was his crime? Or, who were his accusers?
> Under what proof or testimony he fell?
> 'There came', says one, 'a huge, long, worded letter

[175] CEWBJ 2:277. [176] Ibid. 2:370. [177] Ibid. 2:374. [178] Ibid. 2:378.
[179] Ibid. 4:280, ll. 73–7.

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From Capreae against him.' 'Did there so?
Oh!' – they are satisfied; no more.[180] (5.776–80)

Terentius reports deeds 'beyond the acts of furies' (5.740), committed by '[t]he eager multitude, who never yet / Knew why to love or hate, but only pleased / T'express their rage of power' (5.741–3).[181] As we further learn, this 'multitude' rushed to the destruction of Sejanus 'with that speed and heat of appetite / With which they greedily devour the way / To some great sports or a new theatre' (5.745–7).[182] Significantly, this comparison between arbitrary political violence and playgoing is Jonson's own and not taken from the play's sources. Jonson's play thus would seem to confirm Plato's view that the theatre, 'in undermining reason, leads exactly to the kind of violence that characterizes the tyrant: it is both the image and cause of tyranny'.[183]

According to Plato, a tyrant can only be judged by someone 'who is able to enter in his thought into the character of a man', who is not 'astonished by the outward show of tyrants', and who sees the tyrant 'stripped of his theatrical trappings'.[184] This assessment tallies with the investigative ethos of Tacitist historiography and Jonson's play, but also stands in tension with the play's critique of a tyrannical regime that does not acknowledge any distinction between private and public and between (supposed) thoughts and actions. As already noted, the play offers very different perspectives on dissimulation and secrecy, depending on whether they are practised by the victims of persecution or by a tyrannical regime. But, instead of resolving this tension between *politique* claims for privacy and a Tacitist impulse to penetrate outward appearances, Jonson accentuates it. Arruntius and Silius, the two Germanicans who are most fanatically committed to the truth, sometimes sound conspicuously similar to the tyrannical regime which they denounce. The Germanicans may criticise Sejanus' and Tiberius' practices of espionage and surveillance, but at times they entertain even more violent desires of accessing their opponents' inwardness.

When Sejanus' two spies, Satrius and Natta, first enter the stage, Silius states that '[their] close breasts, / Were they ripped up to light, it would be found / A poor and idle sin to which their trunks / Had not been made fit organs' (1.24–7).[185] Silius literally wishes to make windows into men's hearts by cracking up the body. When speculating

[180] Ibid. 2:386. [181] Ibid. 2:384. [182] Ibid. 2:385. [183] Bushnell 18.
[184] Plato, *Republic* 577A–B. [185] CEWBJ 2:237.

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whether Sejanus might be planning to eliminate the Germanican candidates for the succession of Tiberius, Arruntius gives voice to such a desire in even more violent terms:

> If I could guess he had but such a thought,
> My sword should cleave him down from head to heart
> But I would find it out; and with my hand
> I'd hurl his panting brain about the air,
> In mites as small as atomi, to undo
> The knotted bed . . ..[186] (1.253–8)

For Arruntius, even the suggestion that Sejanus may have 'but such a thought', as opposed to solid evidence or actual deeds, is sufficient to inspire a violent fantasy of dismembering his body in order to discover Sejanus' inward self. His fantasy does indeed come true at the end of the play when Sejanus' body is 'torn and scattered, as he needs no grave' (5.812).[187] However, nothing is discovered in the process. Whether deserved or not, Sejanus' dismemberment has nothing to do with truth or justice, but is the result of mob violence and Tiberius' and Macro's ruthless political machinations.

As I have argued in this chapter, *Sejanus His Fall* reflects, like *Sir Thomas More*, the predicament of dissenters who find themselves under a tyrannical regime that does not respect the *politique* distinction between inward dissent and seditious agitation. *Parrhesia*, the rhetoric of free speech, and neo-Stoicist moral philosophy serve as the primary resources for the Germanicans in their attempts to navigate a treacherous environment of espionage and persecution. Unlike *Sir Thomas More*, however, *Sejanus His Fall* displays a deep distrust in theatricality. The play's reflections on theatricality have nothing to do with the tolerance for secrecy or dissimulation which some of the Germanicans claim in the face of persecution. Instead, theatricality is primarily associated with Machiavellian power politics and an immoderate appeal to the passions that stands in contradiction to Stoicist equanimity and detachment. Dissimulation thus remains highly ambivalent. Just as much as it may serve to escape from persecution and to establish a realm of inward sovereignty, it is also one of the most deadly weapons in the arsenal of a tyrant. The Germanicans' vigorous condemnations of the flattery and dissimulation that reign

[186] Ibid. 2:250. [187] Ibid. 2:387.

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supreme at Tiberius' court therefore stand in unresolved tension with their own eventual refuge to secrecy and indirection. Despite the legitimacy of dissimulation under persecution, it ultimately remains a symptom of crisis and political degeneration that comes with the considerable psychological and social cost of universal paranoia and distrust.

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CHAPTER 6

# *Exposing Religious Dissimulation*
## *The Stage Machiavel in Christopher Marlowe's* The Jew of Malta

While the previous chapters were mostly concerned with the increasing intolerance towards outward conformity from the perspective of religious dissenters, this chapter focuses on conceptions of theatricality that advertised the theatre as a potential ally in the exposure of religious dissent and suggests that Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* embodies this ethos of exposure in exemplary fashion. This chapter begins with an exploration of the connections between late Elizabethan conceptions of theatricality and the ideological project of exposing the hypocrisy of religious dissenters. A crucial catalyst for the development of this strain was arguably the Marprelate controversy, in which the theatre came to be conceptualised as an ally in the conservative project of rendering transparent Puritan hypocrisy and discovering the secret seditious intentions that the Puritans allegedly harboured.

The impact of the Marprelate controversy on subsequent drama and the representation of religious dissent on London's public stages has received a good deal of attention, especially with regard to the genesis of the stage Puritan. However, the stage Puritan was by no means the first embodiment of religious dissimulation in post-Reformation England. An earlier and much more dangerous type of dissembler, the stage Machiavel, can equally be linked to the conservative reaction against the Elizabethan Puritan movement. I will accordingly make a case that the stage Machiavel is partly a product of this conservative strain in late Elizabethan drama and functions as a theatrical gesture of disclosure that fulfils a fantasy of total transparency and advertises the theatre's ability to discover, at least in the realm of fiction, the dangerous secrets of religious dissenters. The stage Machiavel of the early 1590s is thus not only an updated embodiment of abstract evil in the vein of the morality play, a sixteenth-century version of the Senecan villain, or the symptom of



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a growing awareness of the autonomy of politics from ethical or religious values.[1] As I illustrate in my reading of Christopher Marlowe's *Jew of Malta*, the stage Machiavel is, to a significant extent, also the product of religious polemics and the theatre's conscious alignment with policies of persecution. Finally, the last section of this chapter will consider the citations from Marlowe's plays in the notorious Dutch Church libel in the context of the anti-stranger protests of the early 1590s in order to reconstruct the ideological continuities between anti-Puritan satire and distrust in the religious probity of Protestant refugees from the continent.

## Discovering Dissent

In *Discovering the Subject in Renaissance England* (1998), Elizabeth Hanson has offered an important corrective to the received opinion about Elizabethan England as a relatively tolerant regime that was benignly unconcerned with the inward thoughts and beliefs of its subjects.[2] As Hanson argues, '[t]he hostile discovery of another's innermost being, with its concomitant insistence on that other's secrecy, constitutes one of the most prevalent and historically specific versions of inter-subjectivity in Renaissance England'.[3] The separation between inwardness and outwardness, on which theatrical performance hinges, has to be considered in this larger context of early modern approaches to subjectivity as well. Especially in a politically charged climate, with rising fears of Puritan and Catholic conspiracies, attacks on the theatre were often ideologically related to controversies in the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity.

A case in point is Philip Stubbes' denunciation of the theatres as 'Schooles or Seminaries of pseudo christianitie' in his *Anatomy of Abuses* from 1583,[4] which explicitly suggests a connection between the theatre and religious dissimulation. The *Anatomy* covers a wide range of abuses beyond the theatre, including what Stubbes perceives to be an excessive toleration for religious dissimulation in the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity. Philoponus, the main speaker of the dialogue, finds fault with the religious life of his compatriots and laments that many of them 'plaie the Hipocrites herein egregiouslie; and vnder this cloke of Christianitie, and profession of the Gospell . . . commit all kinde

[1] For the stage Machiavel as little more than a transitional character type between the Vice and a more naturalistic form of evil, see Spivack, especially 373–8; for an extended discussion of the Senecan influence, see Praz; for the stage Machiavel as a symptom of 'an awareness of the imminence of the secular state and of the emergence of the "new men"' (173), see Scott.
[2] Hanson. [3] Ibid. 1. [4] Stubbes 1:145.

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of Deuilrie, purchasing to themselues the greater da*m*nation, in that thei make the worde of God, a vizard to couer their abhominations withall'. Such hypocrisy is not only a matter of ordinary moral failures. Especially Catholics, whose duplicity is unmatched, 'are suffered with too much lenitie amongest them'. They 'lurke secretely in corners', Philopomus tells us, 'or els walk openly, obseruyng an outward *decorum*, and an order as others doe; and then maie no man saie blacke is their eye, but thei are good Protestants'.[5] As Stubbes insists, Catholics should not 'haue this freedome amongest vs'.[6] Stubbes' theatrical vocabulary ('plaie', 'cloke', 'vizard') suggests a close conceptual link between religious dissimulation and the theatre, which he attacks more specifically later in his treatise.

It is important to note that, despite his sympathies for a number of Puritan concerns, Stubbes was by no means a nonconformist. On the contrary, he even urged his more radical brethren to conform with the Established Church on contentious issues such as liturgical vestments.[7] Neither Stubbes' critique of the theatre nor his misgivings about outwardly conforming Catholics were the exclusive province of Puritan hardliners. Such concerns about dissembling Catholics were widely shared among Elizabethan Protestants and also voiced in government propaganda. In his justification of the government's use of torture, Thomas Norton likewise warns against rebellious Catholics, who 'keepe themselues couert vnder pretence of temporarie and permissiue obedience to her Maiestie', only to rise up 'so soone as there were sufficient force whereby the bull of her Maiesties depriuation might bee publikely executed'.[8] The increasing persecution of both Puritans and Catholics in the 1580s and a concomitant intolerance for dissimulation arguably also forced the theatre to reflect on its own political implications.

As I have already suggested in the Introduction to this book, much theatrical anti-Puritanism was predicated on a condemnation of hypocrisy that suppresses the theatre's own reliance on dissimulation. Similarly, Huston Diehl observes that by '[e]xposing both the hypocrisy of puritanism and the deception of the stage, they seek to legitimate the stage, paradoxically by inculcating in their own spectators certain habits – deep

[5] Ibid. 1:130. [6] Ibid. 1:131.

[7] For Stubbes' sympathy with aspects of the Puritan ecclesiastical reform programme, such as the election of ministers as opposed to unilateral episcopal appointment, see 2:90–100; however, for Stubbes' defence of the episcopacy and the position of the Established Church in the vestments controversy, see also 2:101–16.

[8] Norton A2v.

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distrust of theatricality, a heightened vigilance toward human failings – ordinarily associated with puritan discipline'.[9] Such a conception of theatricality, which is dedicated to revealing, rather than concealing, stigmatised beliefs and behaviour, can be contextualised in a larger awareness that certain forms of dissimulation could paradoxically serve to discover hidden truth. Francis Bacon identifies as one of three advantages of simulation and dissimulation that it allows 'the better to discover the Minde of another . . . And therefore, it is a good shrewd Proverbe of the Spaniard; *Tell a lye, and finde a Troth*. As if there were no way of Discovery, but by *Simulation*'.[10] Significantly, espionage against religious dissenters and supposed traitors, one of the most momentous and controversial instances of such investigative dissimulation, was practised by a number of Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, who repeatedly thematised such dissimulation in their plays as well.

Spying on religious dissenters was controversial since late antiquity, as is attested by Augustine's writings on lying. His treatise *Contra mendacium* (*Against Lying*) had been occasioned by the question of whether it was legitimate to lie and dissemble in order to ferret out the heretical Priscillianists, who allegedly felt no obligation to reveal their unorthodox beliefs to outsiders. Augustine strongly condemned those who pretended Priscillianist sympathies for the purpose of infiltrating the sect: '[B]y what right shall we blame and dare to condemn in another his thinking that the truth ought to be concealed by lying, when this is what we teach ourselves?'.[11] Even though eminent Protestant theological authorities such as Pietro Martire Vermigli approved of Augustine's judgement,[12] it was largely ignored in practice. A writer like Anthony Munday, who was never slow to condemn dissimulation, spied on dissenters throughout the 1580s and 1590s and glorified this practice, curiously enough, in the proto-Puritan but supposedly loyalist protagonist of *The First Part of Sir John Oldcastle*.[13] Marlowe too may have been involved in espionage, and Jonson's own service to the Crown in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot has a rather unflattering equivalent in the player Histrio in Jonson's earlier *Poetaster*,[14] who provides the opportunistic Lupus with intelligence. Even though these playwrights express very different views on espionage in their plays, the practice of feigning sympathy with political or religious

[9] Diehl, 'Disciplining Puritans and Players' 90. [10] OFB 15:22. [11] Augustine, *Treatises* 132.
[12] Vermigli 2.13.24.
[13] See Chapter 3. For Munday's possible espionage in the Netherlands in the 1590s, see further Schrickx, 'Munday in the Netherlands'.
[14] 4.4, CEWBJ 2:109–11.

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dissenters in order to expose them figures large in their meta-theatrical reflections on dissimulation. Far from promoting tolerance for hypocrisy, the theatre was thus also conceptualised along the lines of an ethos of exposure, which never fully resolves the dialectic tension between its simultaneous condemnation of and reliance on dissimulation.

Espionage may be the paradigmatic instance of this ethos of exposure. However, the theatre's ability to reveal what is hidden was frequently touted in more abstract ways as well. In *Pierce Penilesse, His Supplication to the Divell* (1592), for instance, Thomas Nashe defends the theatre with reference to its ability to pierce false appearances and show things as they are: 'In Playes, all coosonages, all cunning drifts ouer-guylded with outward holinesse, all stratagems of warre, all the cankerwormes that breede on the rust of peace, are most liuely anatomiz'd'.[15] The theatre is thus dedicated to exposing, and not teaching, hypocrisy, as its opponents claimed. Nashe may echo earlier dramatic criticism, such as Philip Sidney's claim that tragedy 'openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours'.[16] However, by promoting the theatre's ability to expose 'outward holinesse' as mere hypocrisy, Nashe arguably also aligns the theatre to a regime that resorted to increasingly aggressive methods of accessing the secrets of religious dissenters.

The explicit alignment of the theatre with ideologies of persecution took shape on an unprecedented scale when playwrights such as Nashe turned their attention to the Puritan movement in the late 1580s and became embroiled in the Marprelate controversy.[17] Patrick Collinson and Kristen Poole have suggested that the stage Puritan, the most common instance of religious hypocrisy on the early modern stage, was in fact a product of the Marprelate controversy.[18] As I suggest in the following, however, a different character type embodied the fear of dissembling dissenters in the early 1590s. Before the rise of the stereotypical stage Puritan, it was arguably the stage Machiavel that expressed the theatre's allegiance to the project of sounding the depths of religious dissent in its most spectacular form.

[15] Nashe 1:213. [16] Sidney 98.

[17] For an authoritative account of the Marprelate controversy, including the authorship question, see Black's comprehensive introduction to Marprelate, *The Martin Marprelate Tracts: A Modernized and Annotated Edition*. Earlier criticism speculated that Munday, too, may have lent his pen to the dramatic productions directed against Martin or been the author of *An Almond for a Parrat* (Wilson, 'Anthony Munday' 489–90; Turner 86–7), but there is no concrete evidence for such assumptions. For a more sceptical position, also with regard to supposed Martinist topicality in Munday's *John a Kent and John a Cumber*, see Black, '"Handling Religion"' 165–6.

[18] See Collinson, 'Theatre Constructs Puritanism' 164–7; Poole 16–44.

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## Machiavelli and Puritan Subversion

The Florentine statesman and writer Niccolò Machiavelli caused offence in Elizabethan England not least because he analysed religion in purely instrumental terms. Not only in *The Prince*[19] but also in the *Discourses*,[20] Machiavelli propagates religion as a vital instrument of government, regardless of whether it has any truth value or not. Such disingenuous instrumentalisation of religion for ulterior purposes became a central aspect of the Elizabethan stage Machiavel.[21] To be sure, religious hypocrisy is not equally pronounced in all cases and may be lacking especially in more Senecan specimens, such as Lorenzo in the *Spanish Tragedy* or Aaron in *Titus Andronicus*. Nonetheless, religious dissimulation is a prominent feature of the stage Machiavel in general, as exemplified by the protagonist of *Alphonsus, Emperor of Germany* (c. 1594?), one of its most explicitly Machiavellian instances. At the beginning of the play, Alphonsus is lectured by his secretary on a number of the Florentine's political maxims, including the following from chapter 18 of *The Prince*: 'A prince above all things must seem devout, but there is nothing so dangerous to his state, as to regard his promise or his oath'.[22] Even earlier, he claims '[t]o be an outward Saint' and 'an inward Devill', noting that '[t]hese are the lectures that my Master reads'.[23] Similarly, Shakespeare's Richard III is able to 'seem a saint when most I play the devil' (1.3.337). Intriguingly, Alphonsus and Richard do not sound very different from more sinister representations of Puritanism on the early modern stage, such as Angelo in *Measure for Measure*, the 'outward-sainted deputy' (3.1.90), who 'is yet a devil' (3.1.93). As Katharine Eisaman Maus has suggested, contemporary religious controversies may have contributed to the rise of the stage Machiavel as arch-hypocrite on the public stage,[24] and there are indeed concrete connections between the emergence of the stage Machiavel and contemporary anti-Puritan polemics.

[19] Machiavelli, *Prince* ch. 18. [20] Machiavelli, *Discourses* 1.11–15.
[21] For the association of Machiavelli with 'politick religion', see Raab 77–101. [22] *Alphonsus* 4.
[23] Ibid. 2. *Alphonsus* was first printed in 1654 and attributed to George Chapman on the title page. The attribution has been generally rejected (sometimes in favour of George Peele), and the precise date of composition is uncertain. Earlier criticism postulated a date in the late Elizabethan period (c. 1594). While Martin Wiggins has speculated that the play may have been written as late as 1630 (8:405), the traditional dating to the 1590s has recently been reasserted by Blamires. Generally, Machiavelli may have been more familiar to early modern playgoers than the surviving corpus of plays from the period would suggest. Henslowe's diary records performances of a lost play, entitled *Machiavel*, on 2 March, 3 April, and 1 June (?) 1592 by Lord Strange's Men (see Wiggins 3:116). That is to say, the play was in the company's repertoire at the same time as *The Jew of Malta*. Another lost play, *Machiavel and the Devil* (1613) by Robert Daborne, may likewise have been more or less closely concerned with the Florentine's afterlife (see Wiggins 7:331–2).
[24] Eisaman Maus 47.

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Poole claims that Shakespeare's Falstaff 'both catalysed and epitomized the early modern representation of the stage Puritan' and that '[t]he years immediately preceding the creation of the Henriad witnessed the extended and rambunctious pamphlet warfare known as the Marprelate controversy'.[25] However, there was actually a gap of some seven years between Martin's death and the birth of Falstaff. Poole does not explain why Martin was revived only after such a considerable period of silence, and neither does she discuss the evolution of anti-Puritan stereotypes on the stage in the meantime. Comic stage Puritans, such as Falstaff, Florilla in Chapman's *Humorous Day's Mirth*, or Stupido in *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, do not become common before the late 1590s. Only one specimen has been traced further back, 'John the Precise' in *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1592).[26] While there is a considerable time gap between the Marprelate controversy and the establishment of the stage Puritan, the stage Machiavel of the early 1590s might help to fill in some gaps in scholarship on the dramatic representation of Puritanism.[27]

Machiavelli's name regularly surfaces in anti-Puritan polemics from the late 1580s and early 1590s, serving as a salutary reminder that Puritanism was perceived as a serious threat to the established social and political order.[28] A prominent role in this association of Puritanism with Machiavelli was arguably played by the aforementioned Thomas Nashe, who was equally at home in the worlds of religious polemics and the theatre. There has been disagreement on Nashe's personal commitment to the episcopal cause when he took up his pen in order to write against Martin Marprelate. While G. R. Hibbard takes Nashe's anti-Puritanism at face value and credits it to his deep-seated political, moral, and theological convictions,[29] Lorna Hutson has read Nashe's religious polemics primarily in terms of a bid for patronage rather than sincere conviction.[30] That being said, Nashe's fluency in the idiom of state-sponsored anti-Puritan propaganda, whether sincere or not, is now acknowledged not only in the anti-Martinist tracts but also in his later prose writings.[31] Already in *An Almond for a Parrat* (1590), Nashe called Martin

[25] Poole 21.

[26] Adkins, 'Genesis of Dramatic Satire'. For a more recent account of the development of the stage Puritan, see further Walsh 39–85.

[27] Monogenetic accounts of the stage Puritan are, of course, unduly reductive. Besides traditional anti-clerical satire, Robert Hornback has also drawn attention to another potential embodiment of anti-Puritan stereotypes in the early 1590s, namely, carnivalesque and rebellious clowns such as Jack Cade in *2 Henry VI*.

[28] For occasional, although frequently casual, references to Machiavelli in anti-Marprelate writings, see, for example, *Martins Months minde* (1589), G2r, F2v, H1v, H2v, H4v; or *The First Parte of Pasquils Apologie* (1590), in Nashe 1:113.

[29] Hibbard 39. [30] Hutson, *Nashe in Context* 67–8.

[31] See, for example, Anderson; McGinnis and Williamson 113–20; Loewenstein 164–72.

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Marprelate a 'Good munkcie face Machiauell',[32] and this association of Puritanism with Machiavellianism occurs again, for instance, in Nashe's *Pierce Pennilesse* (1592), when the Knight of the Post comprehends

> vnder hypocrisie, al Machiauilisme, puritanisme, & outward gloasing with a mans enemie, and protesting friendship to him I hate and meane to harme, all vnder-hand cloaking of bad actions with Common-wealth pretences: and, finally, all Italionate conueyances, as to kill a man, and then mourne for him, *quasi vero* it was not by my consent, to be a slaue to him that hath iniur'd me, and kisse his feete for opportunitie of reuenge, to be seuere in punishing offenders, that none might haue the benefite of such meanes but myselfe, to vse men for my purpose and then cast them off, to seeke his destruction that knowes my secrets; and such as I haue imployed in any murther or stratagem, to set them priuilie together by the eares, to stab each other mutually, for feare of bewraying me; or if that faile, to hire them to humour one another in such courses as may bring them both to the gallowes.[33]

Nashe here links Puritanism with a catalogue of Machiavellian villainies that are rather more severe than the moral failings of later stage Puritans and for which it would be easy to find numerous examples in the stage Machiavels of contemporary drama.

A number of Nashe's contemporaries (and perhaps dramatic collaborators) strongly intimate a connection between Puritan hypocrisy and Machiavellian villainy in the early 1590s. Puritan connotations might be perceived, for instance, in the 'zealous contemplation' (3.7.93) and 'devotion and right Christian zeal' (3.7.103) of Shakespeare's Richard III, as well as his ability to clothe his 'naked villainy / With odd old ends, stol'n forth of Holy Writ' (1.3.335–6). Such religious hypocrisy recalls anti-Puritan satire in plays such as *A Knack to Know a Knave* (1592), in which the quasi-Puritan John the Precise similarly 'can turne and wind the Scripture to his owne vse' (ll. 1636–7). As James R. Siemon notes in his edition of *Richard III*,[34] Richard's histrionic religious zeal, but also his habit of seducing widows, and not least the threat to the established political and social order which he embodies might have evoked the relatively recent Marprelate controversy. One might further wonder whether Richard's boast that he 'can add colors to the chameleon' (3H6 3.2.191) reflects a more general complaint voiced by Pasquil (probably one of Nashe's pseudonyms in the Marprelate controversy), namely, that 'these newe pampred factions [i.e. the Puritans] at this day, haue shaken the harts of many of her Maiesties louing people, and made them Chamaelion like,

[32] Nashe 3:348. [33] Nashe 1:220. [34] Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, ed. Siemon 31–6.

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capable of any fayth saue the right'.[35] Finally, Richard's ploy of spreading 'drunken prophecies' (1.1.33) as a form of political subversion could further have reminded contemporary audiences of the Puritan prophet 'Frantick Hacket', who had challenged Queen Elizabeth's title to the crown.[36]

Traces of anti-Puritan polemics can also be registered, more explicitly, in the Marlovian stage Machiavel. The ruthless and ambitious usurper Mortimer in *Edward II*, for instance, follows a number of Machiavelli's political principles, such as his preference for building his state on fear rather than on love (5.4.52–3)[37] and his scheme to outsource his worst atrocities and to silence his partners in crime after the deed is done (5.4.1–20).[38] Intriguingly, Mortimer not only dissembles his political ambitions in a manner that is reminiscent of Richard III's pious humility before his coronation; he also codes them anachronistically in terms of Puritan hypocrisy:

> They thrust upon me the protectorship
> And sue to me for that that I desire,
> While at the council table, grave enough,
> And not unlike a bashful Puritan,
> First I complain of imbecility,
> Saying it is *onus quam gravissimum*,
> Till being interrupted by my friends,
> *Suscepi* that *provinciam*, as they term it,
> And, to conclude, I am protector now.[39] (5.4.56–64)

Similarly, the social climber Baldock, who seeks preferment at Edward's court, reveals that his Puritan habitus is 'mere hypocrisy' (2.1.44), which he adopted in order to please his 'precise' (2.1.46) patron, although he is 'inwardly licentious enough / And apt for any kind of villainy' (2.1.50–1). Puritans, *Edward II* intimates in line with contemporary religious polemics, are not only socially and politically ambitious but also morally rotten to the core.

In *The Jew of Malta*, presumably written during or shortly after the Marprelate controversy, Marlowe's Machiavellian protagonist likewise has a distinctly Puritan flavour.[40] Barabas tells his daughter to pretend

[35] Nashe 1:75. [36] On Hacket, see also Chapter 3. [37] See also Machiavelli, *Prince*, ch. 17.
[38] See also ibid. ch. 7.
[39] All references to Marlowe's plays are to *Doctor Faustus and Other Plays*, eds. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, Oxford World's Classics, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, with the exception of *The Massacre at Paris*, which I quote from *The Complete Plays*, eds. Frank Romany and Robert Lindsey, London: Penguin, 2003, 507–62.
[40] *The Jew of Malta* cannot be dated precisely with any certainty. Its first attested performance took place, according to Henslowe's diary, on 26 February 1592, but Henslowe does not mark it as new. The play, or at least the prologue, must have been written after the death of the Duke of Guise on 23 December 1588, mentioned in the prologue: 'Now the Guise is dead' (3). However, Marlowe's use

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a conversion to Christianity in order to be admitted to the nunnery, remarking that 'religion / Hides many mischiefs from suspicion' (1.2.282–3). This dissembled piety is again recognisable as stereotypically Puritan:

> . . . be thou so precise
> As they may think it done of holiness.
> Entreat 'em fair, and give them friendly speech,
> And seem to them as if thy sins were great,
> Till thou hast gotten to be entertained. (1.2.285–9)

The elaborate façade of Abigail's deception, her 'precision', her 'holiness', and her protestation of 'great sins', would eventually indeed become typical attributes of the stage Puritan.[41] A contemporary parallel is already offered by John the Precise in *A Knack to Know a Knave*, a play that, like *The Jew of Malta*, was staged by Lord Strange's Men in 1592. John the Precise invokes the same semantic field ('holiness', 'precision', 'great sins') in his exposition of religious dissimulation as Abigail:

> Brethren (say we) take heed by Adams fal,
> For by his sinnes we are condemned all.
> Thus preach we still vnto our brethren,
> Though in our heart we neuer meane the thing:
> Thus doe we blind the world with holinesse,
> And so by that are tearmed pure Precisians. (ll. 339–44)

of 'now' does not necessarily imply that the play was written shortly after Guise's death. As George Coffin Taylor has shown, Marlowe's inflationary use of 'now' is often without semantic significance and rather serves 'for emphasis, helping perhaps to call the reader's attention more intently to what is to follow' ('Marlowe's "Now"' 97). The play was entered in the Stationers' Register on 17 May 1594, but the earliest (surviving) edition dates from 1633. This long delay from composition to publication has raised questions concerning textual corruption and possible revisions, perhaps by Thomas Heywood, who was responsible for the revival of the play on the Caroline stage. Earlier critics interpreted the perceived dissonance between the predominantly tragic tone of the first two acts and the farcical tone of the remainder of the play as evidence for major revisions of the second half of the play, but critical opinion in the second half of the twentieth century has been more willing to accept the textual integrity of the 1633 quarto (Brandt 2–5). At any rate, when Heywood published revised versions of his own plays from the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean period in the 1630s, his revisions were usually minimal (Dutton, 'Thomas Heywood' 191–2), which might suggest that he would not have tinkered excessively with *The Jew of Malta* either.

[41] The friars in the play likewise ventriloquise Puritan cant when they say of Abigail's conversion, perhaps not without innuendo, that 'this proceedeth of the spirit' (1.2.327–8) 'and of a moving spirit too' (1.2.329). Such vocabulary was to be reproduced by Jonsonian stage Puritans such as Ananias, who justifies the consultation of an alchemist by noting that '[t]he motion's good, / And of the Spirit' (*Alchemist* 3.1.49–50, CEWBJ 3:629), or Zeal-of-the-Land Busy, who is 'moved in spirit' (*Bartholomew Fair* 3.6.68, CEWBJ 4:356) to demolish an idolatrous gingerbread stand. As in the case of *A Knack to Know a Knave*, the projection of anti-Puritan stereotypes on Catholic friars may recall the roots of anti-Puritan satire in older, anti-clerical satire. Compare with John the Precise, who refuses to give alms because 'the Spirit doth not mooue me thereunto' (ll. 1632–3).

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Like Mortimer's faux-humility in *Edward II*, however, fake conversions in *The Jew of Malta* have potentially deadly consequences and are a far cry from the generally more harmless anti-Puritan satire on the Jacobean stage. In the early 1590s, when the true dimensions and ambitions of the Elizabethan reform movement had come to light for the first time and self-proclaimed prophets announced that Elizabeth had forfeited her right to the throne, the Puritan pretence of piety was not just the stuff of comedy as in Jonson's later treatment of the godly in *The Alchemist* or *Bartholomew Fair*. Puritan hypocrisy was also perceived as a cover for much more sinister and momentous political scheming. It only makes sense that *The Jew of Malta* shows greater resemblance to the aggressive and grotesque satire of Nashe's polemical writings than Jonson's and especially Shakespeare's comparatively benevolent send-up of Puritanism, as exemplified by Falstaff only a few years later.[42]

The fact that such concerns with Puritan hypocrisy and subversion find an expression in Marlowe's portrayal of a Jew need not surprise us. It is debatable to what extent Barabas, who frequently cites the New Testament and swears by the body of Christ (1.2.91), is actually meant to be an accurate portrayal of a Jew in the first place. As James Shapiro has noted, 'the Jew as irredeemable alien and the Jew as bogeyman in whom the Englishmen could be mysteriously "turned" coexisted at deep linguistic and psychological levels'.[43] Lieke Stelling has further pointed out that uncertainties concerning religious identity in post-Reformation England, 'the possibility of dissimulation and deceit',[44] were frequently projected onto alien figures such as Jews. A link between Judaism and Puritanism may also have been recongisable for early modern audiences in the critique of the Puritans' 'Judaizing tendencies', such as their preoccupation with Hebraism, Sabbatarianism, and their insistence on the continuing validity of Mosaic Law more generally.[45] In *Oldcastle*, for instance, the Bishop of Rochester denounces the play's quasi-Puritan protagonist as 'this heretic, / This Jew, this traitor' (6.49–50), and Jonson's Puritan Zeal-of-the-Land Busy in *Bartholomew Fair* is likewise associated with Judaism, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7. Of course, this is not to say that Barabas, too, should really be considered a Puritan. However, a non-essentialist understanding of Jewishness, as was common in the period,

[42] For a stylistic comparison between Nashe's *Almond for a Parrat* and *The Jew of Malta*, see Hibbard 48.

[43] Shapiro 24. [44] Stelling, *Religious Conversion* 6.

[45] See Glaser 30–63; Shapiro 20–6. For the remarkable fluidity and non-essentialist nature of the early modern category of Jewishness and its implications for the representation of Judaism on stage, see also Smith, 'Was Shylock Jewish?'.

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allows us to understand Barabas in *The Jew of Malta* as a projection of intra-Christian conflicts. That is to say, the play addresses a number of social, political, and religious concerns with dissimulation that were most urgent not in English attitudes towards Jews but in the intra-Christian tensions that threatened the Elizabethan settlement and reached fever pitch in the late sixteenth century.

## The Stage Machiavel as Meta-theatre

As Hanson observes, 'what is new and catastrophic in the Renaissance is not . . . a sense of interiority, but the usually fearful, even paranoid recognition that interiority can give the subject leverage against his world'.[46] This recognition that hidden inwardness poses a danger is registered in exemplary fashion in the stage Machiavel. Dissimulation is an indispensable aspect of Machiavellian power politics, and the efficiency of a Machiavellian politics depends, like Nicodemism, on not being recognised as such. Machiavel, who speaks the prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, accordingly observes that 'such as love me guard me from their tongues' (prol. 6). The stage Machiavel, however, is the exact opposite of such a concealment of interiority, namely, the embodiment of a powerful fantasy of disclosure and transparency. Presumably from the Vice of the morality play, the stage Machiavel has inherited an urge to reveal his stratagems in soliloquies and asides that usually make his endeavours perfectly transparent to the audience while other characters on stage are unwittingly ensnared by them.

In this regard, the distinction between generally Machiavellian characters and the stage Machiavel as a *character type*, which comes with a specific form of audience address, is crucial. Ferneze in *The Jew of Malta* or Shakespeare's Henry V, for instance, may be said to follow Machiavellian precepts, but do not reveal themselves to the audience in the same manner as Barabas or Richard III. Victoria Kahn has characterised the stage Machiavel as 'a metatheatrical embodiment of the fear of theater'.[47] However, as a meta-theatrical gesture of disclosure, the stage Machiavel does not just express unease with the theatre's powers of deception but simultaneously showcases its capability to anatomise what Nashe calls 'cunning drifts ouer-guylded with outward holinesse'.[48] Eisaman Maus accordingly states that the attractiveness of the stage Machiavel is a product of his self-disclosure to the audience and that '[t]he epistemological self-assurance of *Richard III* is its ultimate fiction, its most effective seduction scene'.[49] In the stage Machiavel,

[46] Hanson 16. [47] Kahn 89. [48] Nashe 1:213. [49] Eisaman Maus 54.

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the theatre effortlessly grants access, or rather a fantasy of access, to the inwardness not only of tyrants but also of persecuted religious groups, which Elizabethan authorities strove so laboriously to achieve by means of espionage, the imposition of oaths, and even torture.

The tendency of stage Machiavels such as Richard III, Selimus, Alphonsus, Iago,[50] or the protagonist of Jonson's fragmentary *Mortimer His Fall* to declare their intentions early on in the play may be influenced by earlier theatrical conventions, such as the homiletic exposition or moral pedigree of the Vice. More concrete traces of such conventions of self-revelation survive, for instance, in Richard's programmatic soliloquy in *3 Henry VI* (3.2.124–95), in Machiavel's prologue in *The Jew of Malta*, or in Barabas' 'I walk abroad a-nights and kill sick people' (2.3.175–202) speech.[51] Another source for this habit of self-disclosure may be the tragedies of Seneca, who likewise added to his Greek models a conventionalised form of disclosure in the exchange between the tyrant and his servant, as for instance in act 2 of *Thyestes*, which Jonson adapts in act 2 of *Sejanus His Fall*.[52]

The suppression of religious dissent and the desire to access the inwardness of religious desires in the late sixteenth century not only put venerable theatrical traditions to new ideological uses but also coincided with actual formal innovations. Ruth Lunney has made a case that '[i]n the context of the late 1580s and the persistence of traditional ways of speaking to the audience, *The Jew of Malta* was revolutionary' and 'open[ed] up new possibilities for the relationship between player and spectator'.[53] Marlowe transformed, Lunney argues, especially the role of asides, both quantitatively and qualitatively. In Marlowe's play, '[a] greater proportion than before are disruptive' and fulfil a function of 'reversing meanings, shifting perspectives, highlighting the disparity between word and action'.[54] The same tendency can also be discerned in other stage Machiavels such as Richard, Aaron, or Iago.[55]

As Chloe Preedy has further pointed out, Barabas' usage of asides bears a striking similarity to linguistic strategies of evasion and deception used by religious dissenters, such as equivocation and mental reservation, that is, the mental completion of an utterance that fundamentally changes the meaning of the spoken words.[56] Just to cite one of many examples, when Lodowick

[50] See Shakespeare's *Richard III*; *Tragical Reign of Selimus*; *Alphonsus, Emperor of Germany*; and Shakespeare's *Othello*.
[51] For the convention of the homiletic exposition of the Vice in general, see Spivack 178–84. For Shakespeare and Marlowe in particular, see Spivack 349–50, 377–8.
[52] See Praz 126; Bushnell 32–3. [53] Lunney 115. [54] Ibid. 119. [55] Ibid.
[56] Preedy, *Marlowe's Literary Scepticism* 49–54.

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censures Barabas for glancing 'at our holy nuns' (2.3.86), Barabas replies with Puritan piety, 'No, but I do it through a burning zeal' (2.3.87), equivocating on the stereotype of the lecherously misguided religious zeal of the Puritans.[57] As is typical for Marlowe's brand of anti-Puritan satire, however, not just harmless human failure but genuine Machiavellian villainy lurks beneath the fair appearance of piety. Just as Mortimer's 'burning zeal / to mend the king and do our country good' (1.4.256–7) in *Edward II* turns out to be a mere cover for his own political ambitions, Barabas' 'burning zeal' serves as a cover for murderous intentions. In a theatrical form of mental reservation, as it were, Barabas accordingly literalises his pretensions in the following aside: 'Hoping ere long to set the house afire' (2.3.88).

To be clear, there is no need to assume that the stage Machiavel is exclusively concerned with Puritan hypocrisy.[58] In *The Massacre at Paris*, Marlowe casts the Duke of Guise, the bête noire of the French Wars of Religion from a Protestant perspective, in the role of the Machiavel. Moreover, at least from the mid-1590s onwards, equivocation and mental reservation were primarily associated with Jesuits and seminary priests.[59] Such linguistic deception was justified by making a distinction between inward truth and its outward expression. As Perez Zagorin notes with respect to mental reservation, 'the communicative relationship existed only between the speaker and himself and the speaker and God, who of course knew the reserved mental part and therefore understood the true meaning of his utterance'.[60] When Robert Southwell defended the practice during his trial in 1595, the chief justice protested that 'yf this Doctrine should be allowed, it would supplant all Justice, for we are men, and no Gods, *and* cane iudge but accordinge to theire [men's] outward actiones *and* speeches, *and* not accordinge to there secrette *and* inward intentiones'.[61] In the theatre, however, spectators, who are able to hear soliloquies and asides,

[57] The stereotype of Puritan lechery implied in Barabas' zeal presumably figured prominently in the contemporary anti-Martinist interludes, as can be gathered from surviving titles such as *The Holie Oath of the Martinistes, That, Thinking to Sweare by His Conscience, Swore by His Concupiscence* or *The Zealous Love-Letter, or Corinthian Epistles to the Widow* (see Collinson, *Richard Bancroft* 79).

[58] The stage Machiavel has also been read as an embodiment of Jesuit dissimulation and shape-shifting. See Ide, '*The Jew of Malta* and the Diabolic Power of Theatrics in the 1580s'. However, a caveat seems in order in this regard. In contrast with the Puritans, the explicit association of the Jesuits with Machiavelli, most prominent in John Donne's vicious anti-Jesuit satire in *Ignatius His Conclave* (1611), did not get fully underway before the early seventeenth century. See Anglo 374–414; Praz 131–42. Ide's only explicit example of the connection between Machiavelli and the Jesuits dates from 1602.

[59] For a good account of equivocation and mental reservation in the context of early modern English Catholicism, see Zagorin 153–220.

[60] Ibid. 176. [61] Quoted in Janelle 82.

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are granted an insight into the secret thoughts of the characters on stage that mirrors God's position in the communicative structure of mental reservation. Marlowe's play thus flatters his spectators by granting them an epistemological perspective on Barabas' stratagems that amounts, in the context of the fictional play world, to divine omniscience, which apologists of the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity usually disavowed.

## Machiavelli and Anti-Puritan Satire in *The Jew of Malta*

In her important study on Marlowe and 'politic religion', Preedy has amply demonstrated that Marlowe's oeuvre betrays a deep fascination with religious dissimulation in all its forms, be it as a cynical tool of power politics or as a strategy of survival for persecuted dissenters.[62] In *The Jew of Malta,* dissimulation is omnipresent, and the play continuously evokes contemporary fears over religious identities and the difficulty of authenticating them. Such concerns were pressing not least because the Turkish Threat in the play would have resonated with fears of a Catholic invasion in England and raised the question of how many native collaborators would have risen up in the event to support the invaders. The *Jew of Malta* arguably invokes such fears when Barabas enters into a secret alliance with the Ottomans and enables their conquest of the Christian island.

Despite the profound amorality that Barabas displays throughout the whole play, the plot is set in motion by an act of religious intolerance, the expropriation of Malta's Jewish population under the threat of forced conversion in order to pay the tribute that Malta owes to the Ottomans. Notably, Barabas first insists that he will 'be no convertite' (1.2.83). At least in the beginning of the play, then, Barabas is unwilling to dissemble his religious convictions like other stage Machiavels such as Alphonsus, who will '[o]n my behaviour set so fair a gloss, / That men shall take me for a Convertite'.[63] Since Barabas also refuses to part, as stipulated, with one half of his goods, the knights of St John eventually carry away *all* of his possessions. As if this were not yet bad enough, they do so with a speed which suggests that they have already gone about plundering Barabas' coffers while he is being asked to convert.[64]

[62] Preedy, *Marlowe's Literary Scepticism.* [63] *Alphonsus* 6.

[64] It is only some forty lines later that officers enter the stage and report: 'we have seized upon the goods / And wares of Barabas, which, being valued, / Amount to more than all the wealth in Malta' (1.2.133–5). Such compression of dramatic time occurs elsewhere in the play too (e.g. act 4, scene 1), but, in the light of the knights' dubious money-raising scheme, it seems significant in this instance.

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Clearly, Ferneze has more interest in Jewish money than Jewish souls. Even though Ferneze blames the misfortunes that have befallen Malta on the presence of the Jews (1.2.63–5), he has no intention of getting rid of such a profitable source of income: 'Yet Barabas we will not banish thee, / But here in Malta, where thou got'st thy wealth, / Live still; and if thou canst, get more' (1.2.101–3). However, Barabas is in no mood for such half-hearted toleration: 'I am not of the tribe of Levi, I, / That can so soon forget an injury' (2.3.19–20). Barabas' humiliation at the hands of Ferneze is followed by a savage orgy of excessive violence spiced up with black humour and tasteless jokes, and, in the process, Barabas' Jewish identity merges with Machiavellian stereotypes:

> We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please,
> And when we grin, we bite; yet are our looks
> As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.
> I learnt in Florence how to kiss my hand,
> Heave up my shoulders when they call me dog,
> And duck as low as any barefoot friar,
> Hoping to see them starve upon a stall . . .. (2.3.20–6)

From dissembling innocence over treacherous courtesy and the hypocritical humility of a 'barefoot friar' to the Florence connection, the speech is replete with the connotations of an Elizabethan stage Machiavel. In the following, the play takes up a number of controversial ideas from Machiavelli's works and applies them to the situation of religious minorities, as exemplified by Barabas.

One of the most controversial claims that Machiavelli had made in *The Prince* was that 'a prudent ruler cannot keep his word, nor should he, when such fidelity would damage him, and when the reasons that made him promise are no longer relevant'. Importantly, Machiavelli adds a crucial qualification that his early modern detractors usually omitted: 'This advice would not be sound if all men were upright; but because they are treacherous and would not keep their promises to you, you should not consider yourself bound to keep your promises to them'.[65] Barabas tries to defuse Abigail's scruples about being betrothed to Lodowick, Ferneze's son, as part of a revenge scheme, in a similar manner:

> It is no sin to deceive a Christian,
> For they themselves hold it a principle
> Faith is not to be held with heretics.

[65] Machiavelli, *Prince* 62 (ch. 18).

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> But all are heretics that are not Jews;
> This follows well, and therefore, daughter, fear not. (2.3.310–14)

Like Machiavelli, Barabas justifies oath-breaking with reference to reciprocity. If Christians do not keep their word with Jews, why should the latter keep their word with Christians? There were a number of dissenters, both Catholic and Protestant, who would have supported such a stance.[66]

Marlowe hardly paints over the intolerance and discrimination that inspire Barabas' revenge spree and his resorting to subterfuge and deception. When reflecting on his habits of treachery and dissimulation, Barabas observes that 'Christians do the like' (5.2.116). However, such universality of deception does not render it morally acceptable, as Barabas' opportunistic and disingenuous use of Nicodemite arguments suggests. In *The Jew of Malta*, the assumption of false religious identities is thus motivated not only by the desire for self-preservation, in terms of which Nicodemites circumscribed the legitimate sphere of dissimulation, but also by the desire for money and revenge. Abigail's fake conversion, for instance, serves the purpose of retrieving Barabas' hidden money from the secret stash in his former house, which had been turned into a nunnery. Nonetheless, Barabas offers a moral justification of dissimulation, and he does so with reference to contemporary Nicodemite discourses. When he persuades Abigail to feign her conversion, he disperses her scruples as follows:

> As good dissemble that thou never mean'st
> As first mean truth and then dissemble it.
> A counterfeit profession is better
> Than unseen hypocrisy. (1.2.291–4)

What these lines presumably mean is that to remain inwardly constant but dissemble outwardly is better than to sway from one's convictions while keeping up a hypocritical pretence of constancy on the outside, that is, 'at first mean truth and then dissemble it'. Barabas' argumentation echoes controversial justifications of Nicodemism, which likewise hinged on a sharp and hierarchical distinction between inward- and outwardness.

[66] Whether faith is to be kept with heretics was a burning question in the sixteenth century, not least in the French Wars of Religion (Anglo 267–8, 350; Bawcutt 31). Marlowe had already dramatised a notorious example of oath-breaking with heretics in *2 Tamburlaine*, when Sigismond, King of Hungary, breaks his treaty with Orcanes, the Muslim King of Natolia. The question of oath-breaking was also of immediate relevance in the case of religious persecution. See, for example, Vermigli's discussion of the same Sigismond, who broke his promise of safe conduct to the reformer Jan Hus on the occasion of the Council of Constance. Vermigli comes to the conclusion that Sigismond's behaviour was indefensible (2.13.21). As already noted, however, the Catholic doctrine of equivocation and mental reservation under certain conditions allowed for deception, even under oath.

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This distinction also served as the justification for equivocation and mental reservation, to which Barabas' linguistic strategies of deception bear such a remarkable similarity.

Moreover, Barabas also refers to Biblical verses that played an important role in early modern justifications of Nicodemism, for instance before he begins to practise on Ferneze's son Lodowick: 'Now will I show myself to have more of the serpent than the dove – that is, more knave than fool' (2.3.36–7). Barabas is alluding to Matt. 10:16: 'Beholde, I send you as shepe in the middes of wolues: be ye therefore wise as serpentes, and innocent as doues'. However, Protestant anti-Nicodemite writers denied that the injunction to be wise as serpents justified dissembling one's faith. In Wolfgang Musculus' dialogue *The Temporysour*, the eponymous Nicodemite vindicates his dissimulation with reference to Christ: 'I do obey the counsayl of Christ, who sayeth: beware of men, for they shall delyuer you vp, &c. As also, be wyse as serpentes . . . Thou knowest that these thinges were spoken of christ, to his faythful flocke, to thende they should more diligentlye take hede to them selfes. Wherfore I se not why I shoulde be reprehended'.[67] Temporysour's incomplete citation of the verse (he omits the dove part) already makes clear that we are not meant to approve his argument. Similarly, Calvin repeatedly accused Nicodemites of failing to be as innocent as doves.[68] Barabas, who reduces the conjunction of prudence and innocence to a choice between knavery and folly, may subvert any claim to moral purity, but he also implicitly concedes a point to anti-Nicodemite writers who insisted that serpentine prudence without dove-like innocence is indeed nothing but knavery.

In fact, Christ's injunction to be wise as a serpent and innocent as a dove is part of his missionary call to spread the gospel, which leaves little room for Nicodemism, as becomes clear a few verses later: 'But whosoeuer shal denie me before men, him wil I also denie before my Father' (Matt. 10:33). At this point in the play, however, Barabas' initial nonconformist credentials are severely compromised. He even pretends to arrange a marriage between his daughter Abigail and Lodovick, and encourages Mathias to court his daughter as well. When Mathias' mother is suspicious of their talk, Barabas pretends that their exchange was merely about Biblical scholarship: 'As for the comment on the Maccabees, / I have it, sir, and 'tis at your command' (2.3.155). Marlowe thus evokes a complex web of intertextual ironies that is worth unravelling.

The reference to Maccabees is poignant since books one and two of the deuterocanonical four books of Maccabees recount the Jewish revolution

[67] Musculus D6r. [68] See CO 7:173; 9:625.

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against the Seleucid Dynasty in the second century BCE. This revolution had been preceded by the gruesome fate of the Maccabean martyrs (2 Macc 7), Eleazar and a mother and her seven sons, who refused to eat pork. Encouraged by their mother, they are, one after another, tortured, have their tongue and extremities cut off, are scalped, and eventually roasted to death. There is a case to be made that the reference to the Maccabees is not arbitrary but of some structural importance in the play. Thus, Barabas' death in a boiling cauldron bears some resemblance to the seven child martyrs, not least since the king 'commanded', according to the Geneva Bible, not only 'to heat pannes', but also to heat 'cauldrons, which were incontinently made hote' (2 Macc 7:3). Furthermore, Barabas' scheme to hold a treacherous banquet in order to rid Malta of the Ottoman invaders has not only a potential Machiavellian model[69] but also a precedent in the rebel leader Simon Maccabee, who was assassinated in the same manner at the behest of his son-in-law (1 Macc. 16). Finally, the Maccabees are significant for the play's treatment of religious dissimulation because the martyrs became models in Protestant and Catholic anti-Nicodemite discourses alike. Calvin, for instance, recounts their story in order to confirm his readers in the constancy of their faith,[70] and Pietro Martire Vermigli too holds them up as an example for those who are tempted to partake in idolatry: 'Machabaea the mother, with hir children, would rather be martyred, than eat of swines flesh against the lawe of GOD'.[71] English Catholics too invoked the Maccabees. William Allen describes the twelve priests whom Munday had helped to bring to the gallows as 'these noble Machabees',[72] and Henry Garnet discusses their case at length in his *Treatise of Christian renunciation* (1593).

It is rather ironic, therefore, that Barabas' reference to a 'comment on the Maccabees' is a pretext for interfaith marriage negotiations. Of course, anti-Nicodemite writers opposed interfaith marriage. Vermigli,[73] for instance, cites Paul's prohibition: 'Be not vnequally yoked with the infideles: for what felowship hathe righteousnes with vnrighteousnes? and what communion hathe light with darkenes?' (2 Cor. 6:14). In the Catholic Gregory Martin's *Treatise of schisme* (1578), a reference to the Maccabees as a precedent for Catholic recusants[74] is even immediately followed by an admonition against marriage with heretics.[75] For Garnet, the martyrdom of the Maccabean martyrs likewise raises the question of how Catholic wives and children should behave in times of persecution. As the Jesuit insists, they are not to

[69] Compare with Machiavelli, *Prince* ch. 8. [70] CO 6:569–70. [71] Vermigli 2.4.19.
[72] Allen, *Briefe historie* c7r. [73] Vermigli 2.4.17. [74] Martin, *Treatise of schisme* D3r.
[75] Ibid. D3v.

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connive with their husbands' or parents' compromises, since 'your husband ouer your soules haue no autority'.[76] The same applies to parents: 'And God hauing at the length shewed you their folly . . . Let their riches go with them into perdition: you haue not a father vpon earth, but in heauen'.[77] Garnet cites a number of Biblical examples in order to confirm his case, including the Biblical Abigail, who supplied David, when he was persecuted by Saul, with provisions against the will of her husband Nabal.[78]

In *The Jew of Malta*, religious division runs through the family as well. Following her Biblical namesake, who was held up as a model for recusants, Barabas' daughter eventually abandons her father as she definitively converts to Christianity. The irony of Barabas' allusion to the anti-Nicodemite proof-text of the Maccabees in his elaborate revenge scheme thus comes back with a vengeance. However, Abigail's spiritual independence from patriarchal authority lasts only for a brief spell – perhaps precisely for what it is – until Barabas poisons his daughter and with her the whole convent that she had entered.[79] Barabas' reference to the Maccabees thus symbolises the strange contradiction between Barabas' supposed concerns for religious purity and his simultaneous willingness to resort to dissimulation. In other words, his nonconformity is nothing but a hypocritical pose, a charge that was to become typical for the stage Puritan, as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 7.

Paradoxically, even as Barabas pretends to arrange a marriage between his daughter and a Christian, he tells Lodovick that 'when we speak with gentiles like to you / We turn into the air to purge ourselves' (3.2.46–7). The same contempt for unbelievers is palpable in Barabas' anti-Christian invective at the beginning of the scene:

> In spite of these swine-eating christians –
> Unchosen nation, never circumcised,
> such as, poor villains, were ne'er thought upon
> till Titus and Vespasian conquered us –
> Am I become as wealthy as I was. (2.3.7–11)

Concerns with religious purity, such as the stipulations of dietary laws for which the Maccabees suffered their martyrdom and which Barabas invokes

[76] Garnet, *Treatise of Christian renunciation* 145. [77] Ibid. 147. [78] Ibid. 145–6.

[79] Lieke Stelling has shown that conversions on the early modern stage are usually sealed either by death or by marriage. As Stelling further notes, 'these theatrical marriage-cum-Christianizations stressed the analogy between a woman's submission to her husband and his God' ('"Thy Very Essence Is Mutability"' 77). Apparently, there is not much room on the early modern stage for the sort of female spiritual independence that Garnet envisions and that Abigail, at least for a short time, embodies as well.

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in his contempt for 'swine-eating christians', also informed Christian anti-Nicodemite discourses.[80] Notions of pollution and infection, as implied in Barabas' purging himself in the presence of Christians, likewise played an important role in Protestant concerns about the Mass as an idolatrous sacrifice. As Vermigli notes, when Protestants 'defile themselves with Masses & vnpure superstitions . . . the light of the truth, which before was kindled in their minds, is by little and little extinguished' (2.4.22). Fatally, however, Barabas ignores this danger of pollution when he sends his daughter into a convent and urges her to seduce her Christian suitors. From a Christian perspective, Abigail may embody the nonconformity of her Biblical namesake, but from Barabas' standpoint she embodies the widely perceived danger of pollution and apostasy that may follow from dissimulation. As Garnet puts it in *An apology against the defence of Schisme* (1593), written against the erstwhile church papist and later Protestant polemicist Thomas Bell, '[d]issimulation is the way to infection'.[81]

Barabas clearly fails to live up to the standards of contemporary anti-Nicodemite writers, and his separatist pretensions are, for most of the play, compromised by ulterior motives. Barabas thus echoes the charge against Puritan nonconformists, namely, that they pursued a hidden, subversive agenda under their pretence of piety. Especially Barabas' reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in the context of his separatist invective against impure Christians, 'till Titus and Vespasian conquered us' (2.3.10), would have had unfavourable Puritan connotations in the early 1590s. For the play's early spectators, Barabas' historical allusion likely carried great weight. When *The Jew of Malta* was played in 1592, Lord Strange's Men also performed a now lost play entitled 'tittus & vespacia', the company's fifth most successful play at the Rose, which premiered, according to Henslowe's diary, on 11 April. The subject of the play was presumably the siege and fall of Jerusalem, and its portrayal would not necessarily have been positive.[82] As Lawrence Manley notes, 'in contemporary treatments of the destruction of Jerusalem, the suicidal infighting of the Jewish Zealot factions is coded to suggest analogies with the separatism of extreme Protestants'.[83] Beatrice Groves has further shown that the siege of Jerusalem was frequently invoked

[80] See Yoder. Concerns about pollution through idolatry are voiced frequently in Calvin's anti-Nicodemite writings. See, for example, CO 6:593; 6:603. For the danger of apostasy that such pollution entails, see in particular 6:543.

[81] Garnet, *Apology against the defence of Schisme* 117. Bell was a Catholic priest trained in Douai and Rome. Despite his initial missionary activities, he would eventually advocate for church conformity in the early 1590s. In 1592, he converted and became a paid polemicist for the Church of England. See Walsham, *Church Papists* 56–60; Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise* 95–8.

[82] For an attempt to reconstruct the play's subject matter, see Manley. [83] Ibid. 177.

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in defence of the Elizabethan settlement as a warning against the disastrous consequences of religious dissent and factionalism at a time when the threat of an invasion called for national unity.[84]

In the Marprelate controversy, Pasquil accordingly claims that 'it can neither stand with policie nor with Religion, to nourish any faction in ciuill matters, much lesse in matters belonging to the Church',[85] and cites the example of Jerusalem in order to buttress his claim: 'Tough the Iewes at the siege of Ierusalem, were pressed by theyr enemies without the walles, and punished wyth such a mortalitie within, that the carkases of the deade did dunge the grounde, yet they neuer went to the wall, till they grew to be factious & fell to taking one another by the throate'.[86] The same point is brought home in *The Jew of Malta*, when Barabas' hatred for Ferneze eventually leads him to betray Malta to the Ottomans. Throughout the play, Barabas' Machiavellian schemes, usually performed under the cover of dissimulation, spell disaster for all involved parties and exemplify Pasquil's warning in the Marprelate controversy that '[o]ne secret faction in a Realme dooth more hurth, then any generall plague or open warre'.[87] Clearly, there was no universal agreement with Richard Hooker's claim that God does not 'binde us to dive into mens consciences' and that 'their fraude and deceipt hurte any man but them selves'.[88] On the contrary, *The Jew of Malta* highlights the dangers of accepting the stranger, heretic, or infidel in one's midst and the deadly stratagems which they may be able to launch if one does not care to pierce through outward appearances. By exploiting the late Elizabethan upsurge in intolerance for religious dissimulation to great dramatic effect, Marlowe arguably further amplifies the fear and distrust that informed the Elizabethan persecution of religious dissent.

## Puritans and Strangers

While Marlowe's Barabas reflects the charges of subversive hypocrisy that were frequently levelled against the godly in late Elizabethan England, he is simultaneously coded as a stranger and treated as such in the play, not only by virtue of his status as a Jew but also by virtue of his Puritan connotations. The supposed foreignness of English Catholics in conceptions of English nationhood both past and present has received a good deal of attention, for instance in critical reflections on the Protestant bias in the

[84] Groves, *Destruction of Jerusalem* 149. [85] Nashe 1:75. [86] Ibid. 1:75–6. [87] Ibid. 1:75.
[88] Hooker 2:354.

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formation of the English literary canon.[89] However, it bears pointing out that Puritans in pre–Civil War England were likewise routinely suspected of un-English activities. Richard Bancroft portrayed the Puritan movement as part of an international Presbyterian conspiracy, and the fall of Jerusalem offered a powerful analogy for condemning the unpatriotic divisiveness of the godly at a time when the threat of a foreign invasion called for national unity. The perceived threat of Scottish Presbyterianism and the presence of a sizable number of Protestant immigrants especially from war-torn France and the Netherlands, who were often subject to xenophobic animosity, additionally troubled a simple equation of Protestantism with English nationhood.[90] Protestant refugees from the continent were often accused of merely pretending to have fled from persecution in their homeland, whereas their real purpose in coming to England supposedly was to exploit the economic opportunities offered beyond the Channel. In the remainder of this chapter, I contextualise *The Jew of Malta* in this widespread association of Puritanism with a distinctly foreign and suspicious brand of Protestantism, which complicated the ideological front of English Protestantism against the threat of continental Catholicism.

Zachary Lesser has suggested that the 1633 publication of *The Jew of Malta* served to promote the religious policies of Archbishop Laud, especially Laud's efforts to terminate the relatively independent status of the Protestant stranger churches in England and incorporate them into the Established Church.[91] However, *The Jew of Malta* was already legible in a similar way in the context of anti-stranger sentiment in the early 1590s. The extent to which Marlowe catered to popular resentment against foreign Protestants may be gauged in the Dutch Church libel, a viciously xenophobic poem posted on the wall of the churchyard of the Dutch stranger church in London in early May 1593.[92] The poem is signed by one 'Tamberlaine' and recalls other Marlowe plays as well, including *The Jew of Malta*. The main grievance of the libel is that the Protestant immigrants are waging a trade war against the native economy: 'And Cutthrote like in selling you vndoe / vs all' (ll. 23–4). Presumably with *The Jew of Malta* in mind, the poem also mentions a 'Machiavellian Marchant' who 'spoyles the state' (l. 5), and explicitly characterises the economic practices of the Protestant immigrants as Jewish: 'And like the Jewes, you eate us vp as

[89] For attempts to redress the balance, see, for example, Shell, *Catholicism*; Sweeney.
[90] On the role of Scotland in anti-Puritan polemics in the late 1580s and early 1590s, see McGinnis and Williamson.
[91] Lesser 81–114. [92] For a full transcript of the Dutch Church libel, see Freeman, 'Marlowe, Kyd'.

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bread' (l. 8). The pamphlet thus responds to a controversial bill that was read in Parliament on 28 February 1593, some two months before the libel was posted, which aimed 'to prohibit strangers borne to sell forren wares by waye of retaile, except he hath served seven yeares with an Englishman in the same trade'.[93]

In addition, the poem is critical of England's interventionist foreign policy, especially in the Dutch and French wars of religion, as the 'pore soules' of England 'to the warres are sent abroade to rome, / To fight it out for Fraunce & Belgia, / And dy like dogges as sacrifice for you' (ll. 31–4). The poem thus expresses scepticism about an international Protestant alliance, for which the godly in particular lobbied throughout Elizabeth's reign. Finally, even though the strangers may offer valuable services to the English government in the form of intelligence, they are accused of double-dealing and subversive intentions: 'You are intelligencers to the state & crowne / And in your hartes doe wish an alteracion' (l. 16). The libel's accusation that they are 'infected' with 'Spanish gold' (l. 45) suggests that they are not good Protestants at heart, but treacherous double agents in the service of the Spanish Crown – or at least willing to profit from Spain as much as from England. Like Barabas, the strangers thus conspire with the enemy. In fact, they are fake-refugees, and the libel accuses them of 'counterfeitinge religion for your flight' (l. 42), a term that ominously echoes Barabas' justification of a 'counterfeit profession' (1.2.293) in *The Jew of Malta*. The libel accordingly threatens the Protestant immigrants with a bloodbath on a major scale, as it was staged in Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*, first performed in January of the same year: 'Weele cutte your throtes, in your temples praying / Not paris massacre so much blood did spill / As we will doe iust vengeance on you all' (ll. 39–41).

[93] *Proceedings* 3:85. For the parliamentary debate on the bill, see further ibid. 3:132–9, 142–4. For the illegal retailing practices of which the strangers were accused, see also Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities* 276–8. As one opponent of the bill in parliament, Edward Dimock, pointed out, however, '[t]he beggery of our homes retaylers groweth not by the strangers retaylinge but by our home engrossers', that is, by the manipulation of the market by means of buying up large quantities of a given good (*Proceedings* 3:138). In addition, Dimock challenged the claim that '[t]he retayling stranger buyes nothinge of our contrye commodities, but all the money he takes he ventes over beyond sea' (ibid. 3:137). According to Dimock, mostly English merchants were responsible for the imports that undermined the native economy: 'The strangers are not they that transporte / our coyne but it is our own marchant . . . So it is the merchant English and not the stranger that ventes our coyne' (ibid. 3:138). As Dimock therefore protested, 'this bill is thrust into the House by the home ingrossers of policie that their beggering of our retaylers might be imputed to strangers retayling' (ibid. 3:138). According to Dimock, the strangers were thus merely scapegoats, and the bill was a xenophobic distraction from the rapacious trading practices of 'home ingrossers'.

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This libel was not a unique phenomenon. Another libel, posted in Southwark, similarly accused the strangers of using religious persecution as a pretext for capitalising on English hospitality: 'by your cowardly Flight from your own natural Countries, [you] have abandoned the same into the hands of your proud, cowardly enemies, and have, by a feigned hypocrisy and counterfeit shew of religion placed yourselves here in a most fertile soil'.[94] The doubtful loyalty of the strangers to their hosts in England is also highlighted in several plays from the period. In *The Pedlar's Prophecy*, entered into the Stationers' Register in 1594 and published in the following year, the strangers are described as 'Fortie thousand enemies to the Crowne, / The deadly poyson of hell' (ll. 817–18), who 'When we thinke least ... shall cut our throates' (l. 899).[95] Moreover, their orthodox credentials are cast into doubt since they are not 'Gospellers, / And such as we know to be very good Christians' (ll. 906–7), but 'Anabaptists, Lybertines, Epicurians and Arians' (l. 826). As the pedlar further elaborates, 'vnder the pretence of the Gospell, / There is no heresie, no impietie, no sacriledge onsought, / And all painted out, with the cullour of the Gospell' (ll. 913–15).[96] Like Barabas, who has no qualms to dissemble or urge his daughter to dissemble a conversion to Christianity for ulterior purposes, the strangers abuse the Gospel as 'a cloake to all abhomination' (l. 909).

*The pleasant and Stately Morall, of the three Lordes and three Ladies of London* (1590), ascribed to Robert Wilson, has more to say about the crooked ways of the strangers. When Dissimulation, Fraud, and Simony plan to 'meet and ioine with the enemie', that is, to join the Spanish Armada, Usury urges them to 'be not traitors to your natiue countrie'. Simony, however, refutes the charge by pointing out that Dissimulation is, in fact, not English but 'a Mongrel, half an Italian, halfe a Dutchman

[94] Quoted in Strype 4:234.

[95] Pedlar's estimation that '[t]hree parts in London are alreadie Alians, / Other mongrels, Alians children, mischieuously mixed' (ll. 889–90) is of course a wild exaggeration. That said, 40,000 was a common number traded in anti-stranger polemics, which the government repeatedly tried to refute by conducting a census of the stranger population. The census from 1593 revealed that some 7,000 strangers were living in London, that is, strangers made up approximately 3.5 per cent of the city's population. A much greater problem was posed by London's general population growth, which was all but unrelated to its stranger communities. See Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities* 293.

[96] The two Anabaptists burned in Smithfield in 1575 were part of a Dutch Anabaptist group, and all four anti-Trinitarians (or 'Arians') burned during the reign of Elizabeth were from Norwich, another city with a large Dutch community. In fact, the first of them to be burned, one Matthew Hamont, was of Dutch origin (Coffey 99–102). In conclusion, three of the six heretics burned during the reign of Elizabeth were strangers, which might help to explain the suspicions of heterodoxy levelled against foreign Protestants.

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Fraud so too, halfe French, and halfe Scottish'.[97] Barabas' overdetermination as a dissembling foreigner, who not only belongs to the dispersed Jewish diaspora but also speaks Italian (1.2.91) and Spanish (2.1.39; 2.1.64) and dresses up as a 'French musician' (4.4.29) in order to undo his enemies, invokes the same suspicious cosmopolitanism. The scenario of *The Jew of Malta* in which a 'stranger' (1.2.59) betrays a besieged island to its enemies is thus one of a piece with contemporary xenophobia that was prepared to think the worst of foreigners, even if they were fellow-Protestants.

The scurrilous libels and plays that voiced such crude anti-stranger sentiment were not merely the product of grassroots resentment. They closely resemble the position that Walter Raleigh had promoted some weeks earlier in the parliamentary debate on retailing. Raleigh's speech against the strangers likewise combined the charges of religious dissimulation and treacherous intentions, which we have already encountered so copiously: 'Religion is no pretence for them, for we have no Dutch men here but such as came from those provinces where the ghospell is preached, and here they live dislyking of our Church'.[98] Moreover, Raleigh also casts doubt on the political probity of the Dutch: 'The nature of this Dutchman is to fly to no man but for his profitt, and to none they will obey longe; now under Spayne, now they will have Mounser [i.e. the Duke of Alençon], now the prince of Oringe, but no governor longe'.[99] Similar to the Dutch Church libel, Raleigh even accuses them of enabling the aggressive foreign policy of Spain: 'They are the people that maynteine the Kinge of Spayne in his greatnes. Were it not for them, he were never able to make out such navies by sea nor such armyes as he sends abroad'.[100] Evidently, the loyalty of strangers was under suspicion during the threat of a foreign invasion – even though they had actually made generous financial contributions to the English resistance to the Armada.[101] By the 1590s, the memory of the Protestant exodus from England to the continent during the Marian persecution had grown cold, and international solidarity with Protestant victims of persecution could not be taken for granted.[102]

However, it needs to be stressed that the xenophobia of the 1590s not only was the product of economic tensions and political paranoia but also

[97] Wilson, *Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* F4r. [98] *Proceedings* 3:142–3.
[99] Ibid. 3:143. [100] Ibid. [101] Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities* 294.
[102] For instance, Henry Finch, whom we have already encountered as a Puritan champion of free speech in Chapter 3, had to remind parliament of 'Queen Marye's tyme when our case was as theirs now' and 'those contryes did allow us all those liberties which now we seeke to deny them. They are strangers now. We may be strangers hereafter, therefore let us doe as we would be done to' (*Proceedings* 3:138–9). For a reading of Thomas More's soliloquy on the strangers' case in *Sir Thomas More* in the context of Finch's argumentation, see Tudeau-Clayton.

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revealed a confessional rift between English and continental Protestantism. There were close associations between the stranger churches and the Elizabethan Puritan movement, which add a further layer of meaning to the relationship between Marlowe's dramatic oeuvre, with its anti-Puritan satire, and the xenophobia of the Dutch Church libel. Raleigh's complaint that 'here they live dislyking of our Church' points to an uneasy relationship between the stranger churches and the Church of England. When the stranger churches were formally established during the reign of Edward VI, they were not actually part of the Established Church but were allowed to institute their own form of liturgy and church government, which was considerably closer to continental Reformed churches than the Church of England. Elizabeth placed the stranger churches under the superintendence of the Bishop of London, but continued to grant them independence in church discipline and government, if only for economic reasons.[103]

With their unmistakably continental flavour, the stranger churches inadvertently served as models for the Puritan movement.[104] For instance, the French exile churches, not only in London but also in Canterbury and Norwich, had been allowed to govern themselves as a Presbyterian polity from 1581 onwards.[105] In the 1572 parliament, a bill concerning rites and ceremonies accordingly pleaded for the legalisation of 'such forme of prayer and mynistracion of the woorde and sacraments, and other godlie exercises as the righte godlie reformed Churches now do use in the ffrenche and Douche congregation, within the City of London or elswheare in the Quenes maiesties dominions'.[106] As Collinson argues, Puritans may well have taken inspiration from the 'godlie exercises' practised in the stranger churches, especially the prophesyings that were to be repressed so vigorously in the 1570s.[107] Additionally, a number of Puritans began to attend services there as the pressure on nonconformity grew more intense in the 1570s. As Andrew Pettegree writes, 'there were obviously many whose sympathy for poor refugees from foreign persecution was strained to breaking-point by the encouragement which the stranger churches offered, even by their very existence, to dissidents inside the English Church'.[108] In parliament, Henry Finch accordingly felt the need to point out that the strangers deserved of English charity even 'though they be of a Church to

[103] Grell 11.
[104] For the affinities between the stranger churches and English Puritans, see Collinson, *Godly People*, ch. 9 'The Elizabethan Puritans and the Foreign Reformed Churches in London', 245–72.
[105] Ibid. 266. [106] *Puritan Manifestoes* 151. [107] Collinson, *Godly People* 261.
[108] Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities* 276.

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themselves'.[109] The affinities between Puritans and the stranger churches thus were a contributing factor to their unpopularity by the 1590s.

Brian Walsh has drawn attention to a similar conflation of Huguenots with Puritans in *The Massacre at Paris*, which further confirms the association of Protestant refugees with native radicals.[110] In *The Massacre at Paris*, the Protestants, whom the Machiavellian Guise so piously puts to death, are repeatedly called 'Puritans' (14.56; 19.45). Despite the persecution which the Huguenots experience in Marlowe's play, their faith is thus coded as potentially problematic, as is the case in the Dutch Church libel. Arguably an additional factor for Marlowe's unsympathetic treatment of the Huguenots is that Calvinist resistance theory stood in conflict with the English model of royal supremacy and is repeatedly subject to criticism in Marlowe's dramatic oeuvre.[111] Protestant justifications of political resistance were problematic from an English perspective not least because they were perceived to lend legitimacy to Puritan insubordination. Bancroft, for instance, detected one and the same conspiracy in the Puritan movement and 'the Consistorians of chiefe name beyonde the Seas', such as Calvin, de Bèze, or Hotman, 'who (being of the Geneua humor) doo endeuour by most vniust & disloyall meanes, to subiect to their forged presbyteries, the scepters and swordes of Kings and Princes'.[112] The fact that Puritan writers found a press to publish their works in a Huguenot stronghold like La Rochelle could only have strengthened the perception of an inherent connection between the Huguenots and the seditious Puritans at home.[113] It was therefore by no means far-fetched to apply Marlowe's mordant anti-Puritan satire in *The Jew of Malta* to the stranger churches. Marlowe's projection of anti-Puritan stereotypes onto an alien figure who dissembles religion in order to subvert the commonwealth marries two virulent conspiracy theories of the late 1580s and early 1590s, which were often seen to be related: the fear of a Puritan coup d'état and the fear of foreign subversion.

As I have argued in this chapter, the theatre could be fully complicit in the desire to make windows into men's hearts, which became increasingly dominant in late Elizabethan religious politics. Marlowe's incendiary play reinforces the propagandistic fictions that justified the crackdown on Puritans and Catholics alike and suggests that there must be no tolerance

[109] *Proceedings* 3:138. [110] Walsh 27–38.
[111] For Marlowe's critical treatment of Huguenot resistance as a political instrumentalisation of religion, see Preedy, *Marlowe's Literary Scepticism* 141–9; for the generally ambivalent English reception of Huguenot resistance theory, see further Ferraro Parmelee 76–90.
[112] Bancroft 18. [113] Salmon, *French Religious Wars* 30.

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for dissimulation when the nation is under threat of a foreign invasion. I have further suggested that the rise of the stage Machiavel, to which Marlowe contributed so significantly, is a response to this distrust in the dissenter's inwardness and a hitherto neglected strand in the genesis of the stage Puritan. The theatrical conventions of the stage Machiavel showcase the theatre's ability to grant access, at least in the realm of fiction, to hidden inwardness and to allay the very fears on which its sensationalist representations of religious dissent thrive. As a theatrical gesture of transparency, the stage Machiavel thus offers a deceptive fantasy of total disclosure. However, granting access to the hidden inwardness of religious dissenters was not the only way in which the theatre could be put to the service of an intolerant state. In Chapter 7, the final chapter of this book, I turn again to the reign of King James I and discuss more stereotypical representations of Puritanism on stage. As Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614) makes clear, intolerance does not always take the form of exclusion but can also manifest itself in the guise of moderation and irenicism.

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CHAPTER 7

# *Semi-conformity, Idolatrous Pollution, and Conversion*
## *The Permeable Self in Ben Jonson's* Bartholomew Fair

*Bartholomew Fair* (1614) is, with the exception of the masques, Jonson's only play that was dedicated to James I. It was performed at court on 1 November 1614, one day after its premiere at the Hope Theatre, and its proximity to James' political programme has long been recognised. Jonson had returned to the Church of England in c. 1610 and evidently abandoned the oppositional stance that still informed *Sejanus His Fall*. *Bartholomew Fair*, with its conclusion that gestures towards the resolution of sectarian conflict and the integration of Puritans into society at large, has accordingly been read as an attempt to envision religious and social reconciliation.[1] Indeed, Jonson's play captures and propagates with remarkable faithfulness the ideology of conformity which Elizabethan political and ecclesiastical theorists had developed in the previous century in order to defuse religious conflict and which was also propagated by King James and other theorists of church government in the early seventeenth century.

However, this chapter aims to highlight the coercive aspects of this ideology of conformity as it is reproduced in *Bartholomew Fair* and argues that its rhetoric of moderation and inclusivity is more problematic than previous critics of the play have recognised. That is to say, the play's representation of outward conformity is also legible in terms of King James' authoritarian claim to rule over spiritual as well as secular matters, which Jonson ostensibly endorses. In addition, I argue that *Bartholomew Fair* is concerned not only with Puritan dissent, the predominant focus of previous criticism on the play, but also with questions concerning recusancy that deeply divided England's Catholic communities in the early seventeenth century.

The first part of this chapter makes a case that the play's belittlement of religious persecution is related to the controversy surrounding the Oath of

[1] See, for example, Pinciss; Preedy, 'Performance' 239; Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 338; Walsh 54.



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Allegiance, James' attempt to secure the loyalty of his Catholic subjects. In its historical context, Jonson's deflation of the claims to martyrdom that are voiced by several characters in the play is therefore not simply a critique of the sectarian mindset; it can also be understood as an attempt to undermine the discourses of martyrdom that legitimised Catholic resistance to the Oath of Allegiance. Next, I address the Jacobean ideology of conformity more generally, particularly its theological foundations in the notion of Christian liberty in things indifferent, that is, aspects of religious doctrine and ritual that were considered irrelevant for one's salvation. The notion of Christian liberty has hardly received any attention in scholarship on *Bartholomew Fair*. However, this chapter aims to demonstrate the fundamental importance of Christian liberty for the religious and literary politics of the play, from the Puritan Zeal-of-the-Land Busy's casuistic investigation of whether it is lawful to visit the fair to the legitimacy of the theatre itself.

In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss Busy's conversion, which, significantly, occurs during the performance of a puppet play. Arguably, the conversion is not a sudden change of heart, the consequence of Puppet Dionysius' superior skills in disputation, but the result of a long-term process. It is the constant exposure of the play's Puritan characters to the idolatrous spectacle of the fair and the community of 'worldlings' that gradually wears down their resistance and leads to their integration into society at large. In fact, Busy's warnings against the dangers of pollution and contamination at the fair with its seductive entertainments frequently highlight the parallels between the period's anti-Nicodemite and anti-theatrical discourses. For many Puritans, the anti-Nicodemite imperative was not restricted to refraining from or protesting against idolatrous worship. They perceived idolatry in a whole range of social and cultural activities and effectively propagated, as Karl Gunther points out, an anti-Nicodemite 'way of life'.[2] The Puritan critique of socialising with sinful worldings, failing to display the requisite zeal for the advancement of the Gospel, or indulging in ungodly pastimes like the theatre was thus often underwritten by the same anti-Nicodemite arguments that were advanced against participation in idolatrous worship.

Importantly, Busy's concerns that outward pollution might subvert inward purity have to be taken seriously. They cannot simply be relegated to the province of Puritan spleen, but also loomed large in Catholic debates on conformity and recusancy. It is against the backdrop of such debates on conformity that I will finally discuss Jonson's reflections on the theatre as

[2] See Gunther, *Reformation Unbound* 117–30.

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a controversial thing indifferent, its legitimacy in a Christian commonwealth, and its transformative effects on its spectators. Hence, even though *Bartholomew Fair* may seem to touch on concrete matters of church government only cursorily, it nonetheless offers a rich exploration of early modern anti-Nicodemite habits of thought. This chapter will therefore revisit many of the arguments made about toleration, persecution, and dissimulation throughout this book and point to the larger implications of the issue of religious dissimulation for early modern culture in general and the theatre in particular.

## The End of Martyrdom

In his supra-confessional foreign policy as well as his professed rejection of religious violence, James I liked to style himself as a King who transcended narrow sectarianism.[3] Even before ascending to the English throne, James was at pains to project an image of himself as a lenient and merciful ruler. Prior to Elizabeth's death, he assured Robert Cecil that 'I will never allow in my conscience that the blood of any man shall be shed for diversity of opinions in religion' and that 'I did ever hold persecution as one of the infallible notes of a false church'.[4] In his address to parliament in 1610, he confessed once more that 'I neuer found, that blood and too much seueritie did good in matters of Religion' and proclaimed his 'sure rule in Diuinitie', namely, 'that God neuer loues to plant his Church by violence and bloodshed'.[5] Indeed, he saw his power as 'ordeined by God *Ad aedificationem, non ad destructionem* [2 Cor. 13:10]'[6] – to edify, not to destroy. Jonson would likely have welcomed James' rejection of violent persecution and later described the ideal prince in similar fashion as someone whose 'punishments are rather to correct than to destroy'.[7] In the happy resolution of *Bartholomew Fair* (5.6.93–4),[8] the assiduous justice Adam Overdo likewise cites 2 Cor. 13:10 as a profession of the Pauline 'rejection of judicial authority in favour of Christian humility'.[9]

Rather than presenting a fully developed main plot, Jonson's comedy has as its main subject a rambunctious day at the fair and the many unlikely encounters which the fairground enables between a rich variety of characters and social milieus. However, despite the play's explicit satire of its Puritan characters, who are scandalised by the abuses of the fair, religious conflict

[3] For James' irenicist foreign policy, see Patterson, *King James VI and I*; for a brief survey of James' policing of religious dissent at home, see Coffey 110–21.
[4] James Stuart, *Letters* 204–5. [5] James Stuart, *Political Works* 322. [6] Ibid. 309.
[7] *Discoveries*, CEWBJ 7:533, l. 712. [8] CEWBJ 4:420. [9] Shuger 72.

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remains remarkably tame throughout. Other than in *Sir Thomas More* or *The Jew of Malta*, for instance, murderous religious violence is ostensibly banished to the past in *Bartholomew Fair* and merely invoked in historical and allegorical allusions. A case in point is the play's subplot revolving around Grace Wellborn, who is courted by several young men and whose name evidently carries allegorical connotations. When Quarlous and Winwife draw swords in their competition to win her favour, Grace declares: 'Gentlemen, this is no way that you take: you do but breed one another trouble and offence, and give me no contentment at all. I am no she that affects to be quarrelled for, or have my name or fortune made the question of men's swords' (4.3.1–4).[10] As John Creaser notes in his edition of the play,[11] Grace's censure of her duelling suitors is in line with James' campaign against duelling. However, it also echoes Erasmus' rejection of religious controversy as fruitless fencing in *De libero arbitrio*,[12] which Jonson cites approvingly in *Discoveries*: 'Such controversies, or disputations, carried with more labour than profit, are odious, where most times the truth is lost in the midst, or left untouched. And the fruit of their fight is that they spit one upon another, and are both defiled. These fencers in religion I like not'.[13] Grace's attempt to exert a moderating influence on her competing suitors can accordingly be read as an Erasmian critique of religious conflict.

It certainly helps that Grace turns out to be very amenable. When Winwife finally wins his wife, Grace complies without resistance: 'I desire to put it to no danger of protestation' (5.2.31).[14] Her behaviour thus stands in notable contrast with that of the Puritans, who were accused of putting everything into 'danger of protestation'. In return, Grace is lenient towards her initial suitor, Bartholomew Cokes. Asking his servant Wasp about Grace's whereabouts, Cokes does not seem to be bothered too much by his loss: 'Did you see Mistress Grace? – it's no matter neither, now I think on't; tell me anon' (5.4.88–9).[15] Winwife ironically comments: 'A great deal of love and care he expresses' (5.4.90).[16] Grace, however, once again takes the matter to a political level in what sounds like an inversion of King Lear's test of loyalty: 'Alas! Would you have him to express more than he has? That were tyranny' (5.4.91–2).[17] Grace thus reasserts the privilege of silence, which had been reduced to shambles in Jonson's earlier play *Sejanus His Fall*.

As the case of Grace Wellborn suggests, the scandals which Jonson dissects with such fervour in *Sejanus* have mostly lost their sting in the comedic register of *Bartholomew Fair*. In fact, Jonson's play can be read as

[10] CEWBJ 4:366. [11] Creaser, CEWBJ 4:367. [12] Compare with Erasmus, 'Free Will' 6–7.
[13] CEWBJ 7:535, ll. 753–7. [14] Ibid. 4:390. [15] Ibid. 4:402. [16] Ibid. [17] Ibid.

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a systematic trivialisation of sectarian conflict. At the fair, Leatherhead's repertoire of puppet shows trivialises polemically charged subjects such as the destruction of Jerusalem, which was customarily involved in anti-Puritan polemics, and the Gunpowder Plot (5.1.6–10).[18] Judging by the rude travesty of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* in act 5, they may not have been terribly serious pieces of theatre either. Espionage, which is so central to the moral and political outrage of *Sejanus His Fall*, is likewise ridiculed in Overdo's dismal attempts to spy out 'enormities' at the fair. By parodying the motif of the magistrate in disguise and turning him into a spectacularly inept detective, Jonson also largely bids farewell to a notion of theatricality that flaunts the theatre's ability to grant privileged access to the inwardness of dissenters. Admittedly, this impulse is not entirely absent insofar as the convention of the stage Puritan is predicated on the exposure of Puritan hypocrisy. Unlike Marlowe, however, Jonson envisages the reintegration of Puritans into society not as dangerously misguided tolerance but as a triumph of conformity.

This is not to say that the spectre of religious violence is entirely absent from *Bartholomew Fair*. The St Bartholomew's Day Massacre of 1572, which shares its name with the fair, is repeatedly invoked in the play. When the irascible Wasp at one point attacks the disguised justice Overdo, the latter replies: 'Hold thy hand, child of wrath and heir of anger, make it not Childermas day in thy fury, or the feast of the French Barthol'mew, parent of the Massacre!' (2.6.115–19).[19] To be sure, the allusions to the Biblical Massacre of the Innocents and the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre are absurdly disproportional to Overdo's well-deserved beating. As Kristen Poole puts it, '[i]n the Jacobean fair, as in the Jacobean state, it is pigs, not Protestants, that get roasted'.[20] However, Bartholomew Cokes' own evocation of martyrdom, even though equally inappropriate, hits closer to home. When he is thoroughly relieved by the thieves of the fair, he complains: 'an ever any Barthol'mew had that luck in't that I have had, I'll be martyred for him, and in Smithfield, too' (4.2.57–8).[21] Smithfield, the location of the fair, was indeed a site of execution for Protestant martyrs during the Marian persecution, but also in the much more recent past. The anti-Trinitarians Bartholomew Legate and Edward Wightman were burned at the stake in Smithfield on 18 March and 11 April 1612, respectively. Beforehand, the King himself had, as the Whig narrative goes, 'struggled valiantly to convince

[18] CEWBJ 4:388–9. On the destruction of Jerusalem in the context of Marlowe's anti-Puritan satire in *The Jew of Malta*, see Chapter 6.
[19] CEWBJ 4:331. [20] Poole 69. [21] CEWBJ 4:365.

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Legate of his errors',[22] but to no avail. James was eager to see Legate condemned and burned under the statute *De heretico comburendo*,[23] despite the statute's controversial legality.[24] Legate's namesake in the play, Bartholomew Cokes, would certainly have been an uncomfortable reminder of the anti-Trinitarians' execution two years earlier.[25]

Nonetheless, the executions of Wightman and Legate were a significant watershed in the persecution of religious dissent. The two anti-Trinitarians were the last heretics ever to be burned at the stake in England. In fact, James' intention to 'commit [Legate] publicly to the fire, before the people, in a public and open place in West-Smithfield . . . for the manifest example of other Christians, lest they slide into the same fault' had backfired disastrously.[26] As Thomas Fuller recounts in his *Church History of Britain* (1655), the burnings did not have the intended effect and inspired sympathy rather than contempt for the heretics:

> the purblind eyes of vulgar judgments looked only on what was next to them, the suffering itself, which they beheld with compassion, not minding the demerit of the guilt which deserved the same. Besides, such being unable to distinguish betwixt constancy and obstinacy, were ready to entertain good thoughts even of the opinion of those heretics, who sealed them so manfully with their blood. Wherefore king James politicly preferred, that heretics hereafter, though condemned, should silently and privately waste themselves away in the prison, rather than to grace them and amuse others with the solemnity of a public execution, which in popular judgments usurped the honour of a persecution.[27]

The form of power which New Historicists have called 'the spectacle of the scaffold' had apparently run its course by the early seventeenth century, at least with regard to religious dissent.[28] Unlike executions for more ordinary crimes, heresy executions were ideologically sensitive because they

[22] Jordan 2:44. [23] 2 Hen. IV c. 15.

[24] In his *Acts and Monuments*, John Foxe denies that the Commons ever gave its assent to the statute (586) and argues that the statute was therefore without legal force. He repeats the same claim in his protest to the Privy Council against the burning of two Dutch Anabaptists in London in 1575, when he points out that heresy laws not only had been repealed under Edward and Elizabeth (1 Edw. VI c.12; 1 Eliz. c.1) but had never been valid to begin with (Foxe, 'Appendix to the Life' 31). Edward Coke agreed with Foxe that there was no statutory basis for the penalisation of heresy. However, Coke later suggested in his *Institutes of the Laws of England* that a heretic may be condemned with a common law writ *De heretico comburendo*: 'The Ecclesiastical Judge at this day cannot commit the person that is convict of heresie to the Sheriffe, albeit he be present, to be burnt; but must have the Kings Writ De haeretico comburendo, according to the Common Law' (3:43).

[25] See John Creaser's detailed note in his edition of the play (CEWBJ 4:426). For the trial and execution of Legate and Wightman, see further Coffey 114–5; Jordan 2:43–52.

[26] *Complete Collection of State Trials* 2:734. [27] Fuller 10.4.14.

[28] For the Foucauldian roots of the 'spectacle of the scaffold', see Foucault 32–69.

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bestowed the cultural capital of martyrdom on their victims – the 'usurped honour of a persecution'.[29] It is not least for this reason that an emphatic rejection of religious conflict and factionalism could paradoxically function as a form of intolerance. Where there is no persecution – or, rather, where it is hidden from sight and where heretics 'silently and privately waste themselves away in the prison' – there is no martyrdom either. There is only the stubborn delusion of self-aggrandising troublemakers. In a state that professes to have stopped persecuting heretics, the blame for religious divisions is to be laid exclusively on the dissenter.

Such a deconstruction of martyrdom was already in full sway in James' Catholic policies, especially in the context of the Oath of Allegiance controversy, when Jonson wrote *Bartholomew Fair*.[30] The Oath was a reaction to the Gunpowder Plot and prima facie a means to ensure the loyalty of James' Catholic subjects. Its text required recusants to swear, among other things, that 'our Soveraigne Lorde Kinge James is lawfull and rightfull King of this Realme', and that the Pope does not have 'any Power or Authoritye to depose the King . . . or to authorize any Forraigne Prince to invade or annoy hym or his Countries, or to discharge any of his Subjectes of their Allegiaunce and Obedience to his Majestie'.[31] The enactment of the Oath in 1606 spawned a lengthy, international debate on whether Catholics could legitimately take it without violating their conscience, which reached its peak between 1609 and 1614. There is still considerable scholarly disagreement regarding its enforcement as well as its purpose.[32] In the following, however, I limit myself to its implications for contemporary discourses of martyrdom.

King James contributed to the extended paper war himself and was at pains to denigrate the rhetoric of martyrdom which Catholic opponents employed in order to justify the refusal to take the Oath. In *Triplico nodo, triplex cuneus* (1608), James vehemently denies that the Oath constitutes

[29] For the widespread problem of unpredictable audience reactions to martyrdom, see Gregory 315–41; Lake with Questier, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat* 269–80.

[30] For a helpful account of the controversy and its repercussions in contemporary drama, especially Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*, see Hamilton, *Politics of Protestant England* 128–62. For the text of the Oath, as stipulated by the Popish Recusants Act (3 Jac. I c. 4), see SR 4–2:1074.

[31] Ibid.

[32] A number of scholars have interpreted the Oath as a benevolent gesture, 'a formal offer to moderate papists to accommodate themselves to the Jacobean regime by affirming their civil obedience' (Fincham and Lake 181), which implied 'a royal political theory that recognized the existence of loyal English Catholics' (Ferrell 20) and may even have 'enabled Catholics to become legitimate members of society' (Okines 281). On the other hand, Michael Questier has argued that it was, in its ambiguous wording, 'a diabolically effective polemical cocktail' ('Loyalty, Religion and State Power' 311), designed to sow dissension among Catholics.

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a form of religious persecution and that those who refuse it have any claim to the crown of martyrdom: 'I intended no persecution against them for conscience cause, but onely desired to be secured of them for ciuill obedience, which for conscience cause they were bound to performe'.[33] In his speech to Parliament in 1610, James further declares that 'the gallantnesse of many mens spirits, and the wilfulnesse of their humors, rather then the justnesse of the cause, makes them to take a pride boldly to endure any torments or death it selfe, to gaine thereby the reputation of Martyrdome, though but in a false shadow'.[34] What would be admirable constancy in the case of the true martyr is therefore arrogant obstinacy in the case of recusants.

In his defence of the Oath of Allegiance, James reproduced the Augustinian critique of martyrdom, which the church father had employed against the schismatic Donatists in his own day. Just as James questions 'the justnesse of the [recusants'] cause',[35] Augustine had claimed that it was the cause and not the punishment that makes the martyr.[36] Moreover, just as recusants, according to James, 'take a pride boldly to endure any torments or death it self, to gaine thereby the reputation of Martyrdome, though but in a false shadow', Donatists were, according to Augustine, suicidally enamoured of the prospect of martyrdom, which they prioritised over a concerted effort to promote true religion and abolish idolatry, as he writes in ep. 185 to Count Boniface:

> [W]hen there was idol worship, they [i.e. the Donatists] used to come in great hordes to the crowded ceremonies of the pagans, not to break the idols, but to be killed by the worshippers of idols. If they had received authority to break the idols and tried to do it, then, if anything happened to them, they might have had some kind of shadow of the name of martyr, but they came solely to be killed, leaving the idols intact.[37]

In *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson is arguably complicit in James' Augustinian deflation of Catholic pretensions to martyrdom as a 'false shadow'.[38]

[33] James Stuart, *Political Works* 72. [34] Ibid. 322. [35] Ibid.

[36] See Augustine, ep. 204 to Dulcitius, a tribune who was charged with the legal persecution of Donatists: 'I have proved countless times, both by debate and by writing, that they cannot have the death of martyrs because they have not the life of Christians, since it is not the pain but the purpose that makes a martyr' (Augustine, *Letters* 5:5). See further Ployd. For the early modern application of the Augustinian principle and the sophisticated frameworks of interpretation that it generated, see Brietz Monta 9–78.

[37] Augustine, *Letters* 4:152–3.

[38] James Stuart, *Political Works* 322. Jonson's preoccupation with the Oath of Allegiance and questions of martyrdom has been noticed before, but mainly with respect to Morose as a 'martyr to noise' in *Epicene* (Dutton's 'Introduction' to Jonson, *Epicene* 26–42; Butler, 'Ben Jonson's Catholicism' 198; Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 259–62). However, Alison A. Chapman has also suggested a connection between the Oath of Allegiance and the ridicule of martyrdom in *Bartholomew Fair* (63), which I further develop in the following.

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When the deluded Overdo 'cheerfully' (4.1.28) puts his leg in the stocks, the watchman Bristle mocks his patience and willingness to suffer as follows: 'O'my conscience, a seminary! He kisses the stocks' (4.1.29).[39] As Bristle suggests, the aptly named Overdo is enamoured of a pathos of martyrdom that has no grounding in reality, and his association with a Catholic seminary priest suggests that those who refused to take the Oath of Allegiance were no less risible.[40] We do not actually know whether Jonson himself took the Oath, but, given his refusal to take the sacrament before his re-conversion to the Church of England, he might well have been obliged to do so.[41] Judging by his dramatic output, at least, it seems unlikely that he would have refused to take the Oath. In his *Catiline His Conspiracy* (1611), a play that offers numerous parallels to the Gunpowder Plot, Jonson has Cicero persuade the conspirator Curius to turn intelligencer (as Jonson himself had done after the Plot) by declaring that 'no religion binds men to be traitors' (3.2.135).[42] According to Jonson's Cicero, political and spiritual loyalty are scrupulously to be kept apart.

For his disavowal of the militant recusancy advocated by Cardinal Bellarmine and Pope Paul V, Jonson might well have taken his cue from his friend John Donne.[43] Donne likewise had a Catholic past to shed when he launched his ecclesiastical career with his *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), in which

[39] CEWBJ 4:360.

[40] This is not to say that Overdo is supposed to be read as a recusant. On the contrary, his association with a seminary priest is highly ironic since Justice Overdo himself is tasked with ferreting out priests. In fact, he confesses that his informers 'made me – yea, me – to mistake an honest zealous pursuivant for a seminary' (2.1.25–6, CEWBJ 4:309). Presumably, Jonson's 'honest zealous pursuivant' is an allusion to Anthony Munday, whom Jonson had already satirised in *The Case Is Altered* in the figure of Antonio Balladino and in *Every Man in His Humour* (quarto version) in the figures of the 'Hall Beadle or Poet Nuntius' (1.1.154, CEWBJ 1:133), titles that presumably refer to Munday's occupations as pursuivant, messenger, and writer of city pageants. The reference to an 'honest zealous pursuivant' has possibly topical significance. Munday had served as a pursuivant up to the 1600s, and as late as 1612 Jonson's Catholic friend Hugh Holland, who had contributed a dedicatory poem to *Sejanus*, was indicted for recusancy 'ex testimonio Anthonii Munday' (*London Sessions Records* 71). Munday's behaviour, especially his sojourn at the English College in Rome, consistently raised doubts over his true confessional allegiance, which Martin Marprelate had already exploited to great comical effect (*Marprelate Tracts* 172). Similarly, the Puritan Giles Wigginton concluded that Munday 'seemeth to favour the Pope and to be a great Dissembler' (*Seconde Parte of a Register* 2:253). Overdo's misidentification of the 'honest zealous pursuivant' as a seminary priest thus gains an additional layer of irony if read as an allusion to Munday's dubious religious identity.

[41] According to clause 8 of the Popish Recusants Act, any person 'of the age of eighteene yeares or above . . . which shall not have received the saide Sacrament twice within the yeere then next past, Noble men and Noble women excepted', may be obliged to take the Oath by 'any Bishop in his Diocese, or any two Justices of the Peace' (SR 4–2:1073).

[42] CEWBJ 4:94.

[43] Compare with Paul's *breve* from 1606, reprinted in Dodd 4:cxl–xlii, and Bellarmine's reaction to Archpriest Blackwell's subscription to the Oath, printed in *A large examination taken at Lambeth* b1r–c4r.

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he defended the Oath of Allegiance and rejected Catholic pretensions to martyrdom for the refusal to take the Oath.[44] As Donne warns in his treatise, the prospective martyr 'may suffer some infirmitie: yea, putrefaction, by admixture of humane and passionate respects, if when we are admitted to bee witnesses of Gods honour, we loue our owne glory too much'.[45] In *Bartholomew Fair*, the self-important Overdo, who 'kisses the stocks',[46] arguably likewise embodies what Donne calls 'an inordinate and corrupt affectation of Martyrdome'.[47] As we have already seen in *Sejanus*, Jonson is critical of martyrdom and contrasts Silius' heroic but pointless imitation of Cato with neo-Stoicist constancy as a form of inward retreat. In *Bartholomew Fair*, Jonson again dismisses a Stoicist interpretation of martyrdom when Overdo is mocked as a 'Stoic i'the stocks', a 'fool . . . turned philosopher' (4.6.81–2).[48] Jonson thus echoes Donne, who criticises the Jesuits, who strive to outdo Stoicist models of suicide, 'the Catoes, the Porciaes, and the Cleopatraes', in their 'hunger of false-Martyrdome'.[49] While Silius' suicide in *Sejanus* may be inefficient but at least morally admirable, Stoicist claims to martyrdom are subjected to merciless ridicule in *Bartholomew Fair*.

Perhaps, this transformation of ambivalence into ridicule is related to the fact that Jonson had, at least outwardly, changed sides in the meantime. Jonson returned to the bosom of the Church of England at around the same time that Donne published *Pseudo-Martyr*. His re-conversion was presumably triggered by the aforementioned assassination of Henri IV on 14 May 1610. Fearing a similar fate to that of the French King, James issued a proclamation on 2 June 1610 that barred Catholics from access to court.

[44] As Donne confesses in the preface, he is 'deriued from such a stocke and race, as, I beleeue, no family, (which is not of farre larger extent, and greater branches,) hath endured and suffered more in their persons and fortunes, for obeying the Teachers of Romane Doctrine, then it hath done' (Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* ¶1r). For Donne's Catholic origins, see Flynn, *John Donne*. For Jonson, the question of martyrdom may have been haunted by the ghosts of a past more distant than his own Catholic days. According to William Drummond, Jonson's 'father lost all his estate under Queen Mary; having been cast in prison and forfeited, at last turned minister' (*Informations*, CEWBJ 5:371, ll. 178–9), which suggests that Jonson's father may have suffered, unlike his son, for the Protestant faith (Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 56).

[45] Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* 14–15. [46] Jonson, *Bartholomew Fair* 4.1.29, CEWBJ 4:360.

[47] Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* 9. [48] CEWBJ 4:385.

[49] Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* 150. Jonson appears to have been familiar with Donne's equation of martyrdom with suicide. Mark Bland has argued that in 1609 Jonson transcribed Donne's *Biathanatos*, which likewise treats martyrdom as a form of suicide. In turn, it is worth pointing out that already by mid-1613 Donne seems to have been among those with whom Jonson shared an early draft of *Bartholomew Fair* and apparently found 'nothing obnoxious' in the play, except for Jonson's satire of Inigo Jones in the puppeteer Inigo Lantern, whose name Jonson subsequently changed to Lantern Leatherhead. See Bald 196–7.

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Jonson's persistence in the Catholic faith would effectively have ruined his career as a court poet and might have had even worse consequences.[50] Henri's assassination was followed by an upsurge in anti-Catholic measures, including a stricter enforcement and wider application of the Oath of Allegiance, which surpassed the reaction to the Gunpowder Plot considerably.[51] However, Donne and Jonson decided to launch, or save, respectively, their careers within the Jacobean establishment at this critical watershed. Hence, both had a personal stake in denigrating the road not taken.

Even though King James ostensibly offered Catholics an alternative to militant recusancy, church papists and Catholics who took the Oath of Allegiance were often subject to suspicion. Whereas recusants at least showed their true colours, the loyalty of conformists was, in the eyes of many English Protestants, only skin-deep.[52] Jonson's satire of espionage in Overdo's self-important intelligence-gathering missions and his general tendency in *Bartholomew Fair* to tone down the paranoid obsession with the dangers of the hidden self, which was so common in the anti-Puritan satire of the early 1590s, are arguably related to a desire to ward off similar intrusions into the conscience of Catholic conformists. Jonson may ridicule recusancy, but *Bartholomew Fair* is certainly not a crudely anti-Catholic play. On the contrary, Jonson's concern with salvaging a sphere of inward dissent, which we have already encountered in *Sejanus*, arguably persists in a somewhat different, although equally pessimistic, register in *Bartholomew Fair*, as I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter.

Notably, Jonson does not only expose recusant claims to martyrdom; he also undermines the Puritan pathos of nonconformity in the person of Zeal-of-the-Land Busy. Like Overdo, Busy is put in the stocks and makes rather much of his suffering: 'the lion may roar, but he cannot bite. I am glad to be thus separated from the heathen of the land, and put apart in the stocks for the holy cause' (4.6.67–9).[53] Jonson, however, thoroughly deflates Busy's 'holy cause'. Busy may claim that he 'sitteth here to prophesy the destruction of fairs and May-games, wakes, and Whitsun ales, and doth sigh and groan

[50] Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 272–4.
[51] See Okines. For the significant extension of the scope of the Oath, see 7 Jac. I c. 6.
[52] Milton, 'Qualified Intolerance' 105–6.
[53] CEWBJ 4:385. As Creaser has shown, Busy's proclamation is taken from Richard Bancroft's *Daungerous positions* and echoes a number of Biblical verses that associate lions with persecution (178). A noteworthy parallel is also offered in Richard Cosin's *Conspiracie, for Pretended Reformation*, according to which the self-proclaimed prophet William Hacket literally imitated Daniel in the lion's den. Allegedly, Hacket 'commanded to see the Lyons in the Tower, he tooke the fiercest of them by the head, and had none harme' (Cosin, *Conspiracie* 46).

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for the reformation of these abuses' (4.6.71–3).[54] However, he is put in the stocks not for confessing Christ but for his drunken (3.6.39–40) vandalism of Joan Trash's gingerbread stand, which he condemns as 'the merchandise of Babylon' (3.6.72).[55] If it is the cause and not the punishment that makes the martyr, as Augustine put it, Zeal's claim to the crown of martyrdom is decidedly lacking.

There is a further twist to Jonson's satire of martyrdom. Hypocrisy, the central trait of the stage Puritan, stands, at first glance, in obvious contradiction with Puritan nonconformity. However, Jonson reconciles the two by expanding on James' denunciation of martyrdom as 'a false shadow', driven by a desire for the reputation of martyrdom rather than the real thing. Busy denounces his fellow-detainee Wasp, who manages to escape from the stocks, in the typical terms of Elizabethan anti-Nicodemism, as 'a halting neutral . . . that will not endure the heat of persecution' (4.6.91–2).[56] However, despite his claim that he 'rejoiceth in his affliction' (4.6.71),[57] Busy is, like Wasp, less than eager to suffer for his faith. When Bristle and the madman Troubleall start fighting and leave the stocks open, Busy declares this unexpected turn of events a 'miracle' (4.6.133) and seizes his chance to slip away.[58] In *Bartholomew Fair*, those who claim to suffer for their faith are either deluded or striking a transparently hypocritical pose of nonconformity.

## Christian Liberty and the 'Violence of Singularity'

In *Basilikon Doron*, which was sold in London within days of Elizabeth's death, King James prominently set out the stakes of his ecclesiastical policy to his new English subjects for the first time. As James tells his son, 'your office is . . . mixed, betwixt the Ecclesiasticall and ciuill estate: For a King is not *merè laicus*, as both the Papists and Anabaptists woulde haue him, to the which error also the Puritanes incline ouer farre'.[59] The authority of Scripture may set limits to the monarch's authority in religious matters,[60] but it leaves some scope in the sphere of *adiaphora*, or things indifferent, in terms of which the debate on the Puritan liturgical reform platform was often framed. According to the doctrine of *adiaphora*, some questions

[54] CEWBJ 4:385. [55] Ibid. 4:355, 357.
[56] Ibid. 4:386. Compare with Elijah's warning to Israel: 'How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, followe him: but if Baal be he, then go after him' (1 Kings 18:21). As Martin Butler notes more specifically, 'this phrase was the precise scriptural insult that was used on the Catholic side to stigmatize recusants who opted for conformity' (193). I will argue throughout this chapter that this superimposition of Catholic discourses of martyrdom and Nicodemism on the play's ostensibly anti-Puritan satire is indeed more pervasive than has previously been noticed.
[57] CEWBJ 4:385. [58] Ibid. 4:387. [59] James Stuart, *Political Works* 45. [60] Ibid. 17.

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concerning religious observance are indifferent to salvation, hence subject to Christian liberty.[61] As I argue in the following, the Elizabethan and Jacobean debate on Christian liberty will help to demonstrate how Jonson's satire of the all too human failings of his Puritan characters is not simply a form of moralising social critique but also works to undermine the theological foundations of Puritan nonconformity.

As James declares in *Basilikon Doron* with respect to the controversies over the Prayer Book, especially the surplice, 'I am so farre from being contentious in these things (which for my owne part I euer esteemed as indifferent) as I doe equally loue and honour the learned and graue men of either of these opinions'.[62] However, such indifference does not imply toleration or leniency towards Puritan nonconformity. On the contrary, the authority to regulate *adiaphora* belongs to the monarch alone, and not to the Puritans: 'if . . . they vrge you to embrace any of their fantasies in the place of Gods words . . . acknowledge them for no other then vaine men, exceeding the bounds of their calling; and according to your office, grauely and with authoritie redact them in order againe'.[63] Since salvation was not at stake in such outward matters, Puritans were to submit their private opinions to royal supremacy. Christian liberty could thus entail a political obligation of Nicodemism. To be clear, the scope of such a licence, or duty, of conformity was frequently perceived to be limited. Calvin, for instance, criticised Nicodemites who believed that 'toutes choses externes sont en la liberté du Chrestien'[64] and was adamant that participation in the Catholic Mass constituted an intolerable violation of the purity of faith.[65] From a political perspective, however, defining the scope of things indifferent as broadly as possible could be a means of extending the reach of secular authority in religious matters. The more easy-going a regime presents itself with respect to the minutiae of religious doctrine and ritual and the more it ridicules the 'precision' and stricture of religious dissenters, the more forceful its assertion of its own authority to regulate an expansive area of things indifferent might turn out to be.

This paradoxical authoritarianism reared its head, for instance, at the Hampton Court Conference in January 1604, when James first clashed with his new Puritan subjects. The double-faced nature of Christian liberty became apparent in the discussion of long-time Puritan grievances, such as the use of the sign of the cross in baptism. When the Puritan delegate John

[61] For a good account of the different understandings of Christian liberty by Puritans and conformists, see Coolidge 23–54.
[62] James Stuart, Political Works 8. [63] Ibid. 17. [64] CO 7:170.
[65] See also Calvin, *Institutes* 3.19.13; CO 7:355; CO 9:618.

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Knewstub asked 'how farre such an ordinance of the church was to bind them, without impeaching their Christian liberty?', James was 'much moved' and said that Knewstub's concern 'smelled very rankly of anabaptism',[66] just as he had argued in the *Basilikon Doron* that Puritan nonconformists were 'agreeing with the general rule of all Anabaptists, in the contempt of the ciuill Magistrate'.[67] In other words, claiming Christian liberty was an affront to royal supremacy, and James ruled out, as a matter of principle, any tolerance for diversity in outward ceremonies: 'I will none of that; I will have one doctrine and one discipline, one religion in substance and in ceremony: and therefore I charge you never to speak more to that point, (how far you are bound to obey,) when the church hath ordained it'.[68] As the Jacobean theorist of royal supremacy John Tichborne put it five years later, Christian liberty is not a liberty of the individual subject but the 'the liberty of Christian Princes' to regulate things indifferent as they see fit.[69]

The concept of Christian liberty also lies at the heart of the religious and literary politics of *Bartholomew Fair*. Even though Christian liberty has been virtually ignored in the criticism of the play,[70] its simultaneously libertarian and authoritarian implications arguably account for the paradoxically moderate and inclusive form of intolerance of Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, which is so easily misread as genuine toleration. Jonson was aware of the debates surrounding Christian liberty, as is suggested by the game of vapours in act 4 scene 4, according to the stage directions '*nonsense: every man to oppose the last man that spoke, whether it concerned him or no*' (4.4.25–8).[71] When Quarlous bursts into laughter while observing the game, he defends himself against Wasp as follows: 'Sir, you'll allow me my Christian liberty. I may laugh, I hope' (4.4.94).[72] However, when Christian liberty itself becomes the subject of the game of vapours, a potent symbol for the alleged contentiousness of the Puritans, Knockem ominously interferes, as if he were aware of the decades of vehement controversy on the subject: 'No, that vapour is too lofty' (4.4.100).[73] It was not up to anyone but the King to claim Christian liberty. Already at the Hampton Court Conference, James had warned the

[66] Quoted in Cardwell 198. [67] James Stuart, *Political Works* 7. [68] Quoted in Cardwell 198–9.
[69] Tichborne 106.
[70] For an exception, see the brief and isolated discussion of Busy's use of the concept as 'a satire on clerical puritan attitudes to outward conformity' by Lake with Questier, *Antichrist's Lewd Hat* 587.
[71] CEWBJ 4:372. [72] Ibid.4:374.
[73] Ibid. Later on, Knockem does indeed associate the game of vapours with Puritan intransigence, when he comments on Busy's seditious tirade against the theatre: 'Good Banbury-vapours' (5.5.19).

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Puritans 'never to speak more to that point'.[74] Any argument about Christian liberty would bring the players directly into the heart of a religious controversy that ever threatened to undermine the Church of England and the monarch's supremacy over it.

This is the only explicit reference to Christian liberty in the play, but the concept can be fruitfully applied to Busy's meditations on whether it is lawful to visit the fair. The subject comes up as John Littlewit urges his pregnant wife, Win, to feign a sudden longing to eat pig so that they may go to the fair, where Littlewit's puppet play will be performed. Win's godly mother, Dame Purecraft, consults Busy, who first rejects the Bartholomew-pig as 'a spice of idolatry' (1.6.44).[75] However, Purecraft asks him again to 'make it as lawful as you can' (1.6.49–50),[76] and Busy displays considerable theological ingenuity when he invokes Christian liberty in order to justify the visit to the fair. In doing so, he also prepares the ground for the larger questions of church government that underlie Jonson's treatment of Puritanism in *Bartholomew Fair*.

Initially, Busy admits that going to the fair 'hath a face of offence with the weak, a great face, a foul face' (1.6.56).[77] Busy's terminology, especially his 'spice of idolatry', and his worries about causing 'offence' are indebted to 1 Corinthians, in which Paul warns against offending the weak brethren by eating pagan sacrificial meat (*idolythes*), that is, meats that were consecrated to idols before they were consumed. Even though eating them is indifferent per se and subject to Christian liberty, Paul expresses his concern that doing so might be misunderstood by the weak, that is, those who do not understand that the act is indeed indifferent, as a carte blanche for indulging in idolatry:

> For if any man se thee which hast knowledge, sit at table in the idoles temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weake, be boldened to eat those things which are sacrificed to idoles? And through thy knowledge shal the weake brother perish, for whome Christ dyed . . . Wherefore if meat offend my brother, I will eat no flesh while the worlde standeth, that I may not offend my brother. (1 Cor. 8:10–13)

This concern about causing offence was frequently cited by Reformed theologians such as Calvin, Bullinger, and Vermigli in order to forestall a Nicodemite interpretation of Christian liberty.[78] In Elizabethan England, it also featured prominently in Puritan discourses of nonconformity. Paul's

[74] Quoted in Cardwell 199. [75] CEWBJ 4:306. [76] Ibid. [77] Ibid.
[78] See, for example, CO 6:548; Calvin, *Commentarie* 89r; Bullinger, *In omnes Apostolicas epistolas* 177–8; Vermigli 2.4.32.

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sacrificial meats were accordingly perceived as a Biblical equivalent for the controversial clerical vestments in the debates between Puritans and conformists.[79] Thomas Cartwright, for instance, closely adapts 1 Cor. 8 to the Elizabethan context, when he argues that the surplice may not be strictly idolatrous but nonetheless cause offence to weaker brethren:

> [A]lthoughe I haue knowledge / and knowe that the wearing of a surplice is lawfull for me / yet an other whyche hathe not knowledge / is by my example edifyed / or strengthened to weare a surplice / whereof he can tell no grounde whye he shoulde weare it / and so synneth agaynste hys conscience: and for thys cause S. Paule concludeth / that that whych a man may doe in respecte of hymselfe / maye not be done / and is not lawfull to be done / in respecte of other [*sic*].[80]

The ingenuous Busy in *Bartholomew Fair*, however, finds a way to mitigate this nonconformist imperative in his case for eating pig. Using a sartorial metaphor that seems to echo Cartwright's link between Paul's sacrificial meats and the Puritan rejection of certain clerical vestments, Busy means to 'have a veil put over' (1.6.57) the offence by eating 'with a reformed mouth, with sobriety and humbleness, not gorged in with gluttony or greediness' (1.6.59–61).[81] In this regard, Busy's rejection of 'gluttony or greediness' also resonates with Calvin's discussion of Christian liberty in the *Institutes*, where the Genevan reformer warns that when things indifferent 'are coveted too greedily, when they are proudly boasted of, when they are lavishly squandered, things that were of themselves otherwise lawful are certainly defiled by these vices'.[82] By claiming to eat pig with a 'reformed mouth', Busy steers his case in the direction of the loophole implied in Calvin's argumentation, namely, that Christian liberty may indeed be lawfully enjoyed if its enjoyment is free from greed and other vices.

However, Christian liberty is not only a liberty to participate in indifferent ceremonies. It is also a liberty, and sometimes even a duty, of nonconformity. Despite all his scruples concerning the right use of Christian liberty, Calvin notes with regard to Jewish ceremonial law that 'it is sometimes important for our freedom to be declared before men'.[83] The point is that Christ has freed us from the law and that allegedly excessive legalism obscures Christ's justification by faith. Paul may have circumcised Timothy in order not to offend the Jews (Acts 16:3), but he also rebuked Peter for excessive accommodation of Jewish dietary laws (Gal. 2:11–14) and refused to circumcise Titus (Gal. 2:3) so 'that the trueth of the Gospel might

[79] Coolidge 41. [80] Cartwright, *A replye to an answere* 52. [81] CEWBJ 4:306–7.
[82] Calvin, *Institutes* 3.19.9. [83] Ibid. 3.19.10.

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continue with you' (Gal. 2:4).[84] While Christian liberty could be marshalled in the service of outward conformity in things indifferent, as apologists of royal supremacy did from the vestments controversy onwards, it could also serve as a justification, even duty, of nonconformity, as Puritans emphasised.

In *Bartholomew Fair*, what makes Busy's use of Christian liberty so brilliant is that, in a second step, he gives his tenuous justification of conformity a specious air of nonconformity. Even more, he does so by using the anti-Puritan stereotype of Jewish legalism to his own advantage. Thus, Busy justifies the eating of pig as a declaration of Christian liberty in order to pre-empt the charge of Judaism, which was levelled against Puritans for their strictness in ceremonial questions: 'In the way of comfort to the weak, I will go, and eat. I will eat exceedingly, and prophesy. There may be a good use made of it, too, now I think on't: by the public eating of swine's flesh, to profess our hate and loathing of Judaism, whereof the Brethren stand taxed. I will therefore eat, yea, I will eat exceedingly' (1.6.74–8).[85] Taking up Calvin's caveat that Christian liberty can be 'endangered in weak consciences' by inflexible strictness in outward ceremonies,[86] Busy conjures the spectre of Judaism so that he may heroically proclaim the liberating message of the Gospel by eating pig '[i]n the way of comfort to the weak', just as Paul censured Peter for accommodating Jewish dietary laws and refused to circumcise Titus.

Busy's oscillation between conformist and nonconformist interpretations of Christian liberty reflects the Puritan emphasis that there can be no strict rule about the enjoyment of Christian liberty in things indifferent, which depends in any given case on whether it serves to edify or causes offence.[87] However, his case of conscience is entirely opportunistic and, as he freely admits, 'subject to construction' (1.6.55).[88] Busy has condemned the fair as idolatrous just a few lines earlier, and his words, 'now I think on't', reveal that his brilliant invocation of Judaising is an improvised rationalisation of his carnal desires (to eat pig). Busy thus plays into the hands of conformist theologians, who accused Puritan nonconformists of anarchy and arbitrary wilfulness. According to Richard Hooker, for instance, the Puritan attitude to Christian liberty 'shaketh universallie the fabrick of goverment, tendeth to anarchie and meere confusion'.[89]

[84] Compare with Calvin, *Institutes* 3.19.12. [85] CEWBJ 4:307. [86] Calvin, *Institutes* 3.19.12.
[87] Compare with 1 Cor. 9:19–22 or 1 Cor. 10:23. As Calvin comments on Paul's supposed inconsistency in his changing attitude towards conformity with Jewish rites, '[h]ere was a diversity of acts but no change of purpose or mind' (*Institutes* 3.19.12). For the importance of Christian liberty and its Pauline foundations for Puritan nonconformity, see Coolidge 27–43.
[88] CEWBJ 4:306. [89] Hooker 2:374.

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Hence, '[t]hose things which the Law of God leaveth arbitrarie and at libertie are all subject unto possitive lawes of men, which lawes for the common benefit abridg particular mens liberties in such thinges as farre as the rules of equitie will suffer. This wee must either maineteine or els overturne the world and make everie man his own commander'.[90] Jonson, who would later single out Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* as the pre-eminent English work 'for church matters'[91] and praise its author as one of England's 'great master[s] of wit and language',[92] offers in *Bartholomew Fair* a splendid case of such pernicious individualism in the Puritan Busy, who is 'of a most lunatic conscience and spleen, and affects the violence of singularity in all he does' (1.3.108–9).[93]

Still, a number of critics have found that *Bartholomew Fair* is not entirely unsympathetic towards Puritan revulsion against the abominations of the eponymous fair. Jonson's unflinching portrayal of the petty criminality, ruthless competition, and generally sordid *mores* of the fair raises the question of whether Puritans do not have a point in abstaining from such ungodly pastimes.[94] However, if the fair is, as Busy's case of conscience suggests, a sphere of Christian liberty, where one may eat pig and freely indulge in other kinds of debauchery, its unappealing sides simply prove the conformist case that Christian liberty needs regulation and cannot be enjoyed at one's individual discretion. The play thus corroborates the authoritarian conclusions of theorists of church government such as John Bridges, who emphasises in his *Defence of the gouernment established in the Church of Englande for ecclesiasticall matters* (1587) that God does not allow 'a varying and vnbrideled licence' in things indifferent; instead, he has 'moderated the libertie which he gaue' in the form of 'the godly lawes of the Church, in which discipline and order is conteyned'.[95]

Significantly, Bridges uses the term 'moderation' not in the sense of reticence in government but in support of a strong assertion of discipline and order. Historians such as Lori Anne Ferrell and Ethan H. Shagan have shown that the Elizabethan and Jacobean rhetoric of moderation was an authoritarian ideology of government control and coercion rather than an expression of a desire for peace or reticence in state violence.[96] The same is

[90] Ibid. 2:374–5. [91] *Informations*, CEWBJ 5:366, l. 102.
[92] *Discoveries*, CEWBJ 7:530, ll. 651–2. [93] CEWBJ 4:293–4.
[94] See, for example, Barish 135; Marcus, 'Of Mire and Authorship' 176–7; Collinson, 'Theatre Constructs Puritanism' 160; Slights 5–6; O'Connell 122–5.
[95] Bridges 671.
[96] Ferrell; Shagan, *Rule of Moderation*. With regard to the Stuart defence of holiday pastimes, Leah Marcus identifies a similar style of authority that asserts itself, paradoxically, in the language of

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true for Christian liberty, which had nothing to do with individual freedom when it was invoked by King James and other theorists of royal supremacy. On the contrary, Christian liberty was an authoritarian ideology of government, which justified the suppression of dissent in an always controversial area of things indifferent. Part and parcel of this ideology was the claim that things indifferent *needed* regulation because individual liberty without moderation was always liable to degenerate into licence.

More specifically, this alleged need for moderation as regulation also served to buttress hierarchical forms of secular as well as ecclesiastical government. The Presbyterian model of church government, based as it was on bottom-up principles of election and representation throughout the ranks of its ecclesiastical structure, was frequently criticised by conformist theologians for lacking the hierarchical control that could prevent its degeneration into chaos and anarchy. As Shagan has shown, this point was often made with reference to the supposedly unbridled and licentious Puritan individual, in whom reason likewise fails to exercise proper hierarchical control over the passions and the body: 'For if the puritans themselves were dangerously ungoverned, it followed that the Presbyterian programme for the Church was a form of *un*government, a release rather than a moderation of sinful affections'.[97] The lack of moderation on the level of the individual, which is so conspicuously on display in Busy's 'violent singularity', calls for moderation as a governmental measure of repression.

Bridges, for instance, prominently employs this analogy between the individual and the church in his call to moderate Christian liberty with 'the godly lawes of the Church',[98] when he claims that the Puritans' 'immoderate heate of their inconsiderate zeale' has 'inflamed their passions and patience againste the lawfull authority of the Bishops'[99] and that they 'haue ouer-shot themselues' in 'this their humor for this Presbyterie'.[100] Such emphasis on the imbalance of the Puritan individual is a staple of anti-Puritan writings. Also the idea of a specifically Puritan 'humour' is evident as early as in 1585, when the vice-chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Andrew Perne, wrote to Burghley and warned him against the Puritans' 'fantastical humours daily given to dangerous innovations' and emphasised the need 'to bridle and restrain the licentious affections of the youth of the university at this day'.[101] For anti-Puritan polemicists, there was a clear connection between a lack of governance within the human body,

permission and liberty as opposed to the alleged strictures of the Puritan opposition; see Marcus, *Politics of Mirth*.

[97] Shagan, *Rule of Moderation* 116. [98] Bridges 671. [99] Ibid. 1315. [100] Ibid. 1054.
[101] Quoted in Lake, *Moderate Puritans* 63.

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manifesting itself in unbridled passions and humoral imbalance, and the lack of governance in church affairs, 'this their humor for this Presbyterie'. In the induction to Jonson's *Magnetic Lady* (1632), Probee likewise draws a parallel between moderation in the microcosmos of the body and moderation in the macrocosmos of the church, when he compares the reconciliation of humours to 'the reconciliation of both churches' and argues that 'the quarrel between humours' is 'the root of all schism and faction, both in church and commonwealth'.[102] Puritan humours were not only a matter of personal ethics, a conventional anti-Puritan slur exposing their moral shortcomings, but the bedrock for the justification of authoritarian church government and its extension over things indifferent.

*Bartholomew Fair* reproduces this long tradition of alleged Puritan immoderation. In Busy's Christian liberty of eating pig, for instance, moderation is conspicuously absent. Busy's announcement that he will 'eat exceedingly' suggests that his is everything else but a 'reformed mouth'. Indeed, he ends up eating two and a half pigs all by himself (3.6.39).[103] His drunken railing, which eventually lands him in the stocks as a martyr for the 'holy cause', confirms what Bridges calls the Puritans' 'vnbrideled licence'.[104] In turn, when Quarlous paints the horrors of a Puritan household before the eyes of Winwife, who has set his ambitions on wooing the godly widow Purecraft, he mocks the Puritan ideal of ecclesiastic self-government. As Quarlous imagines the faithful assembly, it is 'the matron, your spouse [i.e., Purecraft], who moderates with a cup of wine, ever and anon, and a sentence out of Knox between' (1.3.73–4).[105] The inversion of gender hierarchies vividly demonstrates the lack of government implied in the Puritan reform programme and echoes King James, who likewise denigrated Puritan government in *Basilikon Doron* by comparing it to Xanthippe's misrule in the household of Socrates.[106] Jonson's satirical vision of Puritan discipline as a wine-drenched gynaecocracy conveys a sense of inverted hierarchies and disorderly procedure, which makes only too clear that Puritan moderation is no moderation at all.

Since Busy conceptualises the fair as a contested site of Christian liberty in his initial casuistry, it is only fitting that it is a site of the spiritual excess and ecclesiastical disorder associated with Puritanism. The fair brings out the worst dissenting instincts in Busy, such as his iconoclastic vandalism against gingerbread men, but especially his claim to divine inspiration and the gift of prophecy. Even before the Littlewit household departs to the

[102] CEWBJ 6:421, ll. 86–9. [103] Ibid. 4:355. [104] Bridges 671. [105] CEWBJ 4:291.
[106] James Stuart, *Political Works* 24.

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fair, Busy proclaims: 'I will eat exceedingly, and prophesy' (1.6.74–5).[107] His abuse of Christian liberty manifests itself not only in his gluttonous gorging on pig but also in his prophetic aspirations as an unlawful arrogation of spiritual authority. His dietary incontinence is thus a visible symbol for his spiritual incontinence.

As a prophet, Busy reflects the tendency of anti-Puritan polemicists to denigrate Puritans as some sort of misguided, spiritualist Anabaptists, who make rather too much of individual inspiration in their refusal to submit Christian liberty to royal authority.[108] Already at the Hampton Court Conference, for instance, James recalled the case of the Scottish Presbyterian John Black, who 'would hold conformity with his majesties ordinances for matters of doctrine, but for matters of ceremonie, they were to be left in Christian liberty to every man, as he received more and more light from the illumination of God's Spirit; even till they go mad, quoth the king, with their own light'.[109] Busy too 'is more than an elder'. He is 'a prophet' (1.3.91),[110] who 'does dream now, and see visions' (1.3.93),[111] and who 'derides all antiquity; defies any other learning than inspiration' (1.3.112–13).[112] Warming up for his disputation with the puppet Dionysius, Busy invocates the Spirit in most dramatic terms: 'I will not fear to make my spirit and gifts known. Assist me, zeal, fill me, fill me, that is, make me full!' (5.5.33–4).[113] Busy thus confirms James' view that Puritan nonconformists were nothing but 'brain-sicke and headie Preachers',[114] better suited for Bedlam than the pulpit.

## Adiaphora and Apostasy

As I have argued so far, Jonson's portrayal of Puritan derailment and licentiousness is to be understood in the context of polemical attacks on the Presbyterian platform and Puritan claims to Christian liberty. Puritan ideals of church government are, as *Bartholomew Fair* suggests, the product of misguided hubris, blind to the obvious need for governmental control over the church in order to moderate its excesses. At the same time, however, the play strikes a highly ambivalent note on the relationship between Christian liberty and conformity. The ease with which Busy and his companions are absorbed into the larger world represented by the fair and eventually lose their nonconformist ethos, culminating in Busy's 'conversion' in the theatre, is not

[107] CEWBJ 4:307.
[108] For the most ambitious attempt to link Puritanism to Anabaptist sedition, as it manifested itself in the Anabaptist uprising in Munster in 1534–5, see Ormerod.
[109] Quoted in Cardwell 198. [110] CEWBJ 4:292. [111] Ibid. [112] Ibid. 4:294.
[113] Ibid. 4:412. [114] James Stuart, *Political Works* 7.

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simply proof of their supposed hypocrisy. Busy's initial fears of idolatrous infection were also a common theme in anti-Nicodemite warnings against outward conformity and anti-theatrical writings that condemned the stage as a source of infectious corruption.

Anti-theatrical as well as anti-Nicodemite discourses were predicated on the notion of a permeable and unstable self, in which – unlike in neo-Stoicist conceptions of selfhood, which Jonson explores in *Sejanus* – the distinction between inward and outward self was always liable to collapse. With Busy's conversion during a puppet play, Jonson suggests that the theatre might be an institution capable of establishing community and religious unity by transforming its spectators. However, Jonson represents this process in the language and conceptual categories of anti-theatricality and anti-Nicodemism. As I will argue in the following, this negative attitude towards the theatre's powers of transformation is probably owed not only to Jonson's conflicted view of the theatre but also to a residual nonconformist sensibility that registers the parallels between Puritan and Catholic concerns about conformity, which affected Jonson's own religious identity.

Despite Busy's nonconformist zeal, his initial insistence on a separation between external profanity and internal purity, as expressed in his claim that 'we may be religious in midst of the profane' (1.6.59),[115] soon collapses once he has taken up the scent of the Bartholomew pig. Ironically, Busy is very much aware of the danger of idolatrous infection. He is accordingly worried about how much Win Littlewit enjoys herself at the fair, as he tells her mother: 'Sister, let her fly the impurity of the place swiftly, lest she partake of the pitch thereof' (3.6.34–5).[116] Already in Chapter 6, I briefly touched on the danger of infection against which both Catholic and Protestant anti-Nicodemite writers warned. The proverbial pitch (Eccles. 13:1), to which Busy alludes and which is famously cited by Falstaff (1H4 2.4.400–4), was prominent in such admonitions. For instance, Vermigli warns in his discussion of 'dwelling among Infidels' that 'our nature is so framed, by reason of naturall or originall sinne, as we be subiect on euerie side to corruption'; hence, 'the vices of other men are likened vnto pitch, the which sticketh wonderfull fast to the fingers and garments of them which touch it'.[117] Catholic writers such as Gregory Martin, Robert Parsons, and Henry Garnet cautioned against the corrupting influence of conformity in very similar terms. Garnet, for instance, moralises the conversion of the former church papist Thomas Bell to Protestantism as

[115] CEWBJ 4:306. [116] Ibid. 4:355. [117] Vermigli 2.4.16.

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follows: 'This is the miserable progression of lamentable Schismatickes, who trusting too much to their owne cleannes, aduenture to touch pitch'.[118] Jonson arguably dramatises such concerns in Busy, whose initial intention to remain 'religious in midst of the profane' (1.6.59) is belied by his eventual conversion.[119]

Puritan debates on nonconformity were closely mirrored by their Catholic counterparts, which drew on the same Biblical precedents, fears of pollution, and Pauline theology of *adiaphora* and Christian liberty.[120] Unsettling parallels can be drawn between the trajectory of Busy's conversion and Jonson's own biography. As a Catholic, Jonson himself had exposed himself to the danger of infection by practising a form of semi-conformity before he fully returned to the Church of England. Jonson and his wife were cited before the consistory court of London on 10 January 1606, not for failing to go to church but merely for refusing to take the sacrament,[121] a controversial, but apparently widespread practice among Catholics at the time. On the occasion of his second citation on 16 April 1606, Jonson claimed to have gone to church 'this halfe yeare'.[122] In *Bartholomew Fair*, Busy's stance towards the idolatrous fair might likewise be described as a form of semi-conformity. Busy is adamant that '[o]nly pig was not comprehended in my admonition' (3.6.22)[123] and that the fair's temptations are otherwise to be shunned or at least condemned. However, as Littlewit tells his wife, '[n]ow you ha' begun with pig, you may long for anything' (3.6.7).[124] Busy and the Littlewits fully succumb to the sensual temptations of the fair, just as anti-Nicodemite writers predicted. Equally fond of the 'diet-drink of Satan's' (3.6.24-5)[125] as Busy, Jonson too

[118] Garnet, *Apology against the defence of Schisme* 118–19. For further references to pitch in the context of religious conformity, see, for example, Parsons, *Brief discours* 6v–7r; Martin, *Treatise of schisme* A2r.

[119] CEWBJ 4:306.

[120] Like a Puritan nonconformist, Gregory Martin insists that the Pauline notion of things indifferent does not excuse conformity if it causes offence (F7v–G3v). Similarly, Robert Southwell alludes to 1 Cor. 8 when he warns against the danger of 'confirming the beleefe of heretikes, in weakening the faith of Catholickes, in quite ouerthrowing the faynte harted and wauering Schismaticks [i.e., conformists]', and mentions 'the daunger of infection by theyre contagious speaches, that crepe like a canker, which to neglect and not to consider is willful blindnesse' (*Epistle of comfort* 171). A manuscript treatise written by either Alban Langdale or William Clitherow, on the other hand, sanctions church attendance precisely because of its status as a thing indifferent: 'if the bare going be, but in his [*sic*] owen nature a thinge indifferent, let every wise man weighe his owen case' (Crosignani et al. 128). This distinctly Pauline argumentation, which centred, like the Puritan debate on conformity, on 1 Cor. 8 (see Crosignani et al. 129), was also adopted by Bell (discussed in Walsham, *Church Papists* 52, 56) and, in the 1600s, by Thomas Wright (Crosignani et al. 366–7). For the authorial attribution of the Langdale/Clitherow treatise, see Crosignani et al. 116–17. Langdale was the chaplain of Viscount Montague, and Clitherow was the brother-in-law of the martyr Margaret Clitherow, both of whom I have already discussed in Chapter 4.

[121] HSS 1:220–1. [122] HHS 1:221. [123] CEWBJ 4:354. [124] Ibid. [125] Ibid.

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eventually gave up his scruples concerning the Lord's Supper and, 'in token of true reconciliation' with the Church of England, 'drank out all the full cup of wine' in the communion.[126]

Jonson's semi-conformity was, as Peter Lake suggests, primarily a gesture of political obedience.[127] Proponents of semi-conformity suggested that going to church was not so much a religious as a political act. As the manuscript treatise ascribed to either Alban Langdale or William Clitherow puts it, 'yf I pray not with them, if I sett whan they knele, if I refuse theire communion', there is no religious act involved, but only a 'signum distinctivum betwene a trew subiect and a rebell'.[128] Bell, the subject of Garnet's condemnation, had even set down a formula to be declared in such a case: 'Good people I ame [*sic*] come hither not for any lykinge I have of any sacramentes, service, or sermons accustomablye used in this place, or to exhibite any reverence to the same, but only to give a sygne of my allegiance and true loyalty to my prince, This is the onlye cause of my cominge and no other'.[129] Jonson's friend, the ex-Jesuit Thomas Wright, set down a similar formula and argued that it was lawful to attend Protestant sermons, albeit one should abstain from the sacrament and common prayer. Wright was, in fact, the most prominent proponent of semi-conformity in the 1600s and the primary target of Paul V's *breve* from 1606, which condemned the Oath of Allegiance and any sort of conformity.[130] Wright's influence might thus well have played a previously underappreciated role in Jonson's semi-conformity after the Gunpowder Plot.[131]

Semi-conformity was by no means necessarily a form of dissimulation. As Alexandra Walsham has pointed out, 'regularly attending church papists were often anything but fencesitters. In a sense, a church was the most appropriate forum in which to dramatise one's ridicule and repudiation of the Reformation'.[132] Even a hardliner like Gregory Martin conceded that one might avoid giving offence to one's fellow believers by turning one's presence in church into a performance of protest: 'A very learned Doctor of Diuinitie, and sounde Catholike may lawfully come to heretical sermons

[126] *Informations*, CEWBJ 5:375, ll. 241–2.
[127] Lake, 'Jonson and the Politics of "Conversion"' 167–8. [128] Crosignani et al. 128.
[129] Quoted in Walsham, *Church Papists* 57. [130] Crosignani et al. 386n.290.
[131] For the text of Wright's formula, see Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise* 98. Wright's recently discovered manuscript treatise on the subject, *De adeundis Ecclesiis Protestantium* (1606?), and the following epistolary exchange with Parsons are reprinted and translated in Crosignani et al. 352–400. The Papal *breve* is reprinted in Dodd 4:cxl–lii. For Jesuit disapproval of Wright's semi-conformity, see also *Records of the English Province* 4:284, 4:372.
[132] Walsham, *Church Papists* 89.

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for the better confuting of them'.[133] In *Bartholomew Fair*, Busy might almost be read as a parody of Martin's 'very learned Doctor of Diuinitie', whose holy duty it is to heckle the Protestant service. Busy's semi-conformity too amounts to a dramatisation of dissent, as he 'cannot be silent' (3.6.61),[134] engages in iconoclastic vandalism, and ends in the stock to 'sigh and groan for the reformation of these abuses' (4.6.73).[135] What is true for the Catholic semi-conformist is therefore just as true for the semi-conformist Puritan: 'Separation within the Church involved a constantly maintained witness of social and cultural distinctiveness practised against neighbours with whom the godly were in daily face-to-face contact and with whom they met in church communion'.[136] Parallels between the Puritan Busy and the ideal of the Catholic semi-conformist, both of whom paradoxically dramatise their dissent in the very forum whose abuses they denounce, are not necessarily far-fetched and might indeed be meant to shed a critical light on Catholic as much as on Puritan semi-conformity. In an attack on Bell from c. 1588, one I. G. (John Mush?), for instance, argues that Catholic semi-conformists could hardly be distinguished from their Puritan counterparts when they dramatised their dissent among the infidels:[137]

> the protestacion which our comfortoure [i.e., Bell] settethe do[w]ne . . . may be made as well by a puritane as by a catholyke, for ther is not one word in yt to signifye the protester a catholyke, and the puritantes [*sic*] resorte to protestantes service not for any lykinge they have of it but merelye for to shewe a sygne of ther temporall loyaltye as the catholykes doe.[138]

However, Busy shows no sign of political loyalty, which might be owed not only to the stereotype of the inherently seditious Puritan but also to a pessimistic assessment of the possibility of loyal dissent as such. The events of 1610 had put considerable pressure on the sort of compromise that Jonson himself had practised in the preceding years. Tellingly, the year of Jonson's re-conversion to Protestantism also saw Wright's final departure from England, 'probably convinced that his long years of cooperation and concessions to the Government had proved fruitless'.[139] Wright's project of semi-conformity had failed, leaving only the choice between martyrdom

[133] Martin, *Treatise of schisme* G2v. Martin's loophole was also taken up by later proponents of semi-conformity such as Bell (Walsham, *Church Papists* 57) and Wright (Crosignani et al. 369).
[134] CEWBJ 4:356. [135] Ibid. 4:385. [136] Collinson, 'Cohabitation' 62.
[137] I. G. has traditionally been identified as John Gerard. See Holmes, *Resistance and Compromise* 238n.10. However, Lake and Questier attribute the treatise to John Mush, Clitherow's biographer (*Trials of Margaret Clitherow* 117–24).
[138] Crosignani et al. 221. [139] Stroud, 'Test Case for Toleration' 208.

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and conversion, whether sincere or not. As Jonson too suggests in his portrayal of Busy, who falls from one extreme into the other, there is no middle ground.

It is no coincidence that Busy finally converts during the performance of a puppet play, the climax of the fair's entertainments. In fact, the notion of Christian liberty in things indifferent and its Scriptural foundations in the Pauline corpus are equally central to debates on the legitimacy of the theatre as they are to debates on outward conformity. Jonson neatly combines the two issues in Busy's seditious defiance of royal authority towards the end of the play. The play thus offers a paradigmatic instance of the close associations between early modern conceptions of theatricality and debates on outward conformity, which I have traced throughout this entire book.

Because of the theatre's origins in Pagan sacrificial ritual, anti-theatrical writers such as Stephen Gosson argued that 'suche men as are erectors of Stage Playes among Christians ... communicate with the sacrifices and idolatry of the Gentiles'.[140] Hence, going to the theatre is 'Apostacy'[141] – or at least an illicit form of Nicodemism, which violates the imperative 'to avoide euery thing that hindereth the outwarde profession of Christianitie'.[142] Notably, even Gosson has to admit that plays 'are nawghte of them selues',[143] just as Paul had declared that 'an idol is nothing in the worlde' (1 Cor. 8:4) and that the eating of sacrificial meats technically falls within the scope of Christian liberty. Like Puritan nonconformists, however, Gosson protests that 'the outward vse of things indifferent, as meats, [is] to be tied to the rule of charitie, and not to be taken, when they offende the consience [*sic*] of the weake'.[144] While few critics were as explicit as Gosson in tying the question of outward conformity to the question of the legitimacy of playgoing, the same Pauline language and argumentation is omnipresent in debates on the legitimacy of the theatre. John Northbrooke, for instance, argues that even if the theatre were indifferent, one ought to refrain 'also from such things as might bee called indifferent, partly least anye of the weaker christians shoulde be corrupted'.[145] As in Busy's concern not to offend the weak brethren, the criterion of edification or offence, respectively, clinches the argument. In his *Vertues Common-wealth* (1603), Henry Crosse likewise concedes that plays 'are not simply forbidden in expresse words' in Scripture, but nonetheless wishes 'to thrust them out as things indifferent, and make them simply vnlawfull'.[146] With reference to 1 Cor. 8, Crosse

[140] Gosson C1r. [141] Ibid. B8r. [142] Ibid. [143] Ibid. B8v. [144] Ibid. [145] Northbrooke 72. [146] Crosse P2r.

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notes: 'If indifferent things giue offence to the weake, they ought to bee remooued: for the freedome of those things giueth courage to the defect of grace, to be more vngracious'.[147]

In turn, apologists of the theatre pointed out that Scripture does not explicitly condemn the theatre. Thus, Thomas Heywood asks why Christ and his apostles 'were content to passe them ouer, as things tollerated, and indifferent', and condemns 'over-scrupulous heads', who 'carpe at that, against which they cannot finde any text in the sacred Scriptures'.[148] Heywood's argument is picked up by the actor and playwright Nathan Field, son of the Puritan leader John Field and Jonson's protegé. In a letter from 1616, Field points out that 'in God's whole volume (which I have studied as my best part) I find not any trade of life except conjurers, sorceres, and witches, *ipso facto* damned; nay, not expressly spoken against, but only the abuses and bad uses of them'.[149]

Despite Jonson's merciless ridicule of Busy's anti-theatrical invective, the play as a whole suggests that there actually is something to the anti-theatrical concern with idolatry. Busy's conversion, or apostasy, during the performance of a puppet play confirms the fear of idolatrous pollution that was voiced by anti-Nicodemite polemicists. Anti-theatrical writers such as the author (Munday?) of *A second and third blast of retrait from plaies and Theaters* likewise frequently point out the theatre's powers to corrupt actors as well as spectators: 'It is maruelous to consider how the gesturing of a plaier, which *Tullie* termeth the eloquence of the bodie, is of force to moue, and prepare a man to that which is il'.[150] Therefore, '[t]here commeth much euil in at the eares, but more at the eies, by these two open windowes death breaketh into the soule'.[151] Gosson rehearses the same concerns in the language of idolatry and religious purity that is so prominent in anti-Nicodemite literature: 'yf we be carefull that no pollution of idoles enter by the mouth into our bodies, how dilligent, how circumspect, how wary ought we to be, that no corruption of idols, enter by the passage of our eyes & eares into the soule?'.[152]

Busy similarly warns against the temptation of vision and, like Gosson and *A second and third blast*, to a somewhat lesser degree, against the

[147] Ibid. [148] Heywood, *Apology* C1r. [149] Quoted in Pollard 277.

[150] Munday, *A second and third blast* 95. Salvianus, whose *On the Government of God* makes up the 'second blast' of Munday's *Second and third blast*, likewise notes that 'al other euils pollute the doers onlie, not the beholders, or the hearers . . . Onlie the filthines of plaies, and spectacles is such, as maketh both the actors & beholders giltie alike' (Munday, *A second and third blast* 3). For a further patristic precedent for this argument against the theatre, see Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 16.

[151] Munday, *A second and third blast* 95–6. [152] Gosson B8v.

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temptation of sound. Arriving at the fair, Busy urges his company to avoid its attractions as best as they can: 'So, walk on in the middle way, foreright; turn neither to the right hand nor to the left; let not your eyes be drawn aside with vanity nor your ear with noises' (3.2.24–6).[153] The fair is, like the theatre, a contagious spectacle whose visual powers of infection are to be avoided at all costs. Initially, Busy repeatedly warns his company with exhortations such as 'Look not toward them, hearken not' (3.2.32),[154] or 'you must not look nor turn towards them' (3.2.36–7).[155] Dame Purecraft admonishes her son-in-law John Littlewit in similar terms: 'Son, were you not warned of the vanity of the eye?' (3.2.57).[156] Jonson is likely alluding to *The vanitie of the eie* (1608) by George Hakewill, the brother of William Hakewill, Jonson's friend and a fellow-member of the Mermaid Club.[157] In *The vanitie of the eie*, Hakewill anticipates both Busy's obsession with idolatry and his opposition to the theatre. For instance, Hakewill discusses 'Howe Idolatry hath a kinde of necessarie dependance vppon the eie' (title of ch. 2)[158] and argues that 'the popish religion consistes more in eie-seruice then the reformed' (title of ch. 25).[159] This iconophobic stance also informs Hakewill's objections to the theatre. Thus, plays 'tie the eie in such manner vnto them, as they withdrawe the minde from the contemplation of [God's] glorie'.[160] Moreover, the theatre also exerts a corrupting influence on the specators' morals. As Hakewill asserts with reference to the church father John Chrysostome, 'whiles thou accustomest thy selfe to see such spectacles, insensibly, & by degrees, bidding adue to shame & modestie, thou beginnest to entertaine and practise the same'.[161] The boundary between inwardness and outwardness is, as Busy would agree, nowhere more precarious than in vision.

If the eyes are the gateway to external corruption, vision poses a fundamental threat to Busy's tenet in *Bartholomew Fair* that 'we may be religious in midst of the profane' (1.6.59).[162] But, of course, Littlewit has a point when he protests that one cannot just navigate through the fair with eyes closed: 'how shall we find a pig, if we do not look about for't? Will it run off o'the spit into our mouths, think you, as in Lubberland, and cry, "Wee, wee"?' (3.2.59–61).[163] Hence, it does not take long until the company

[153] CEWBJ 4:333. [154] Ibid. 4:334. [155] Ibid. [156] Ibid. 4:335.
[157] Donaldson, *Ben Jonson* 264. [158] Hakewill, 13–7. [159] Ibid. 225–8. [160] Ibid. 18.
[161] Ibid. 40–1. [162] CEWBJ 4:306.
[163] Ibid. 4:335. One might argue that Littlewit's question metaphorically draws attention to the difficulties in demarcating the clear boundaries of semi-conformity, of which Wright's Jesuit opponents were aware as well. The Jesuit Robert Jones, for instance, pointed out that restricting one's church attendance merely to the sermon was difficult 'because sermons are not commonly but

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succumbs to the temptations of Smithfield. Remarkably, seeing turns out to be just as pleasurable as eating, recalling Gosson's warning that the 'passage of our eyes & eares' is even more susceptible to idolatrous pollution than 'the mouth'.[164] For instance, Littlewit tells his wife that she 'may long to see as well as to taste' (3.6.10)[165] and to '[l]ook, Win, do, look, a God's name, and save your longing. Here be fine sights' (3.6.48–9).[166] Busy's temptation is likewise as much visual as it is gastronomic: 'He eats with his eyes, as well as his teeth' (3.6.40).[167] Busy's conversion thus already begins with his mere presence at the fair, where '[i]dolatry peepeth out on every side' (3.6.36) and inevitably pollutes its onlookers.[168] When Busy announces that he 'will become a beholder' (5.5.93) after the completion of his conversion, he merely concludes a process that was initiated much earlier.[169]

Even though Jonson ridicules Busy's vociferous condemnations of idolatry and the theatre, the Puritan's worries turn out to be quite justified. In addition, Jonson's portrayal of his eventual assimilation into society at large in the language of theatrical corruption and the dangers of (semi-)conformity renders this process highly ambivalent. On the one hand, the theatre's powers of temptation, especially through its visual appeal, may have allowed Jonson to conceptualise it as an institution that undermined sectarianism and promoted an inclusive stance towards religious unity, as Jeffrey Knapp has suggested.[170] Some apologists of the theatre did indeed highlight the theatre's transformative powers, its ability to convert its spectators, one is tempted to say, which they flaunted as proof of the theatre's moral salubrity. As Heywood puts it, 'so bewitching a thing is liuely and well spirited action, that it hath power to new mold the harts of the spectators'.[171] On the other hand, critics such as Huston Diehl and Michael O'Connell have shown that playwrights such as Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Jonson displayed a heightened sensibility and ambivalence towards the visual medium of the theatre and its impact on its audiences.[172] Even Heywood seems ambivalent about the theatre's powers of transformation when he

at service-time, it cometh to pass that infinite multitudes run to service and sermons' (*Records of the English Province* 4:372). See also Parsons' reply to Wright, in Crosignani et al. 381. The Jonsons may well have done the same, as is suggested by their presentment on 10 January 1606. According to the court records, 'they refuse not to Come to divyne servis but have absented them selves from the Co[mmun]ion' (HSS 1:220).

[164] Gosson B8v. [165] CEWBJ 4:354. [166] Ibid. 4:356. [167] Ibid. 4:355. [168] Ibid.

[169] Ibid. 4:415. [170] Knapp 23–57. [171] Heywood, *Apology* B4r.

[172] Diehl, *Staging Reform*; O'Connell. For Jonson's deeply ambivalent attitude towards the theatre in terms of 'a Christian-Platonic-Stoic tradition that finds value embodied in what is immutable and unchanging' (Barish 143), see especially Barish 132–54.

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describes them as 'bewitching', and such unease with the theatre's powers to undermine self-determination is also palpable in Jonson's comedy.[173]

The manner in which the theatre united its spectators in a shared bond of community was especially problematic for religious dissenters. During his years as a Catholic, for instance, Jonson faced the challenge of demarcating and maintaining a sense of religious identity that set him apart from the larger communities with which he nonetheless interacted on a daily basis. As I have argued in Chapter 5, one way in which religious dissenters could conceptualise such a demarcation was with reference to neo-Stoicist conceptions of selfhood, which allow for a radical split between inward and outward self. However, the viability of such a double self seems much more questionable in *Bartholomew Fair*, which gives its due to the concerns of religious nonconformists. Jonson's characterisation of the theatre's transformative powers in the language of anti-theatrical and anti-Nicodemite discourses arguably betrays not only a deep-seated scepticism towards the manner in which the theatre could subvert its spectators' inward sovereignty and sense of selfhood but also a concomitant, residual nonconformist sensibility, an acute awareness of the difficulties of remaining 'religious in midst of the profane', with which Catholics wrestled just as much as Puritans.

## Authority and Judgement

In the epilogue for the court performance, Jonson ties his concern with religious conformity even closer to the theatre. *Bartholomew Fair* can be read as a portrayal of abused Christian liberty, a failure of the Puritan characters in particular 'to obserue a meane that there may be a difference betweene libertie and lycence',[174] which questions the viability of Presbyterian self-government and makes apparent the need for the strong hand of authority in the form of an episcopal polity under royal supremacy. The epilogue spells out this argument more explicitly – but with respect to the theatre, which, as a thing indifferent, is likewise in need of moderation.

In the light of the danger that players might turn the 'leave' that is 'given them'[175] into 'licence',[176] Jonson's epilogue grants the privilege to decide on the scope of the theatre's liberty entirely to the King, who '[c]an tell / if

[173] For the actual proximity of Heywood's argumentation to that of his anti-theatrical opponents, see Barish 117–21. For an intriguing contextualisation of the anti-theatrical fear of the loss of selfhood in the context of early modern witchcraft discourses, see Levine.

[174] Calvin, *Commentarie* 92v. [175] CEWBJ 4:420, l. 4. [176] Ibid. l. 5.

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we have used that leave you gave us well, / Or whether we to rage or licence break'.[177] Jonson emphatically states: 'This is your power to judge, great sir, and not / The envy of a few'.[178] As Creaser notes, the play's court performance was presumably staged in the Banqueting House, 'the King's audience-chamber and place of state and judgement',[179] which makes Jonson's deferral to James' judgement particularly pertinent. Jonson thus extends his Erastian claim for the royal 'charge' of 'all things divine' to the realm of literature,[180] acknowledging James' triple office as king, priest, and poet.[181] In his attack on the theatre, Busy therefore blatantly disregards the King's prerogative to judge things indifferent, not only in religious but also in theatrical affairs.

Like the anti-theatrical writers cited earlier in this chapter, in *Bartholomew Fair* Busy styles his attack on the stage as an attack on 'that idol, that heathenish idol' (5.5.4).[182] As Patrick Collinson has pointed out,[183] Busy's rallying cry 'Down with Dagon, down with Dagon!' (5.5.1)[184] links him to a bill of complaint in the Star Chamber concerning a notorious iconoclastic episode in the Puritan stronghold Banbury, Busy's hometown, on 26 July 1600.[185] Evidently, Jonson is at pains to align opposition to the theatre with Puritan disruption and sedition. When Leatherhead replies, 'Sir, I present nothing but what is licensed by authority' (5.5.11) and 'I have the Master of the Revels' hand for't, sir' (5.5.13),[186] Busy does not back down in deference to authority. On the contrary, he is just warming up and counters with great verve:

> The Master of Rebels' hand, thou hast: Satan's! Hold thy peace: thy scurrility, shut up thy mouth. Thy profession is damnable, and in pleading for it thou dost plead for Baal. I have long opened my mouth wide, and gaped, I have gaped as the oyster for the tide after thy destruction, but cannot compass it by suit or dispute, so that I look for a bickering ere long, and then a battle.[187] (5.5.14–18)

[177] Ibid. ll. 5–7. [178] CEWBJ 4:420, ll. 9–10. [179] Creaser, CEWBJ 4:257.
[180] *Discoveries*, CEWBJ 7:533, l. 707.
[181] Compare with Jonson's epigram 4 'To King James', in which he acknowledges James as both a political and a literary authority: 'How, best of kings, dost thou a sceptre bear! / How, best of poets, dost thou laurel wear! . . . Whom should my muse then fly to, but the best / Of kings for grace, of poets for my test?' (CEWBJ 5:114–5, ll. 1–2, 9–10).
[182] CEWBJ 4:410. [183] Collinson, 'Theatre Constructs Puritanism' 160–2. [184] CEWBJ 4:410.
[185] According to the bill, the Queen's High Cross was reportedly demolished by a mob among cries: 'God be thanked, Dagon the deluder of the people is fallen down!'. Iconoclastic deprecations against Dagon were rare in the period. Since Busy happens to be from Banbury as well, a deliberate connection between the incident and Jonson's play is likely. See Collinson, 'Theatre Constructs Puritanism' 160–2.
[186] CEWBJ 4:411. [187] Ibid.

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By equating anti-theatricality with Puritan disregard for royal authority, Jonson shrewdly builds a case that brands any opposition to the theatre as sedition. Indeed, opposition to the stage inevitably implied opposition to the King, considering that James had practically established a royal monopoly over the theatre by taking four of the five acting companies in London under the patronage of the royal household.[188]

Significantly, Busy's condemnation of the theatre is inseparable from Puritan discontent with the government of the Church of England, not only in his iconoclastic attack on 'Dagon' but also in his threat of a 'bickering' and a 'battle'. As Creaser has shown, Busy's tirade is largely lifted from Richard Bancroft's anthology of statements of Puritan sedition in *Daungerous positions* (1593).[189] Bancroft credits John Field with the following, seditious statement: 'Tush, holde your peace: seeing we cannot compasse these things, by suite nor dispute: it is the multitude and people, that must bring them to passe'.[190] The second part of Busy's threat is provided by Giles Wigginton, whom we have already encountered as the hapless victim of the 'zealous pursuivant' Munday: 'wee look for some bickering ere long, and then a battel: which cannot long endure'.[191] Both statements are combined in *Bartholomew Fair* in Busy's threat: '[I] cannot compass [thy destruction] by suit or dispute, so that I look for a bickering ere long, and then a battle' (5.5.17–18).[192] Of course, Jonson thoroughly deflates the anti-Puritan paranoia from the 1590s with his satirical portrayal of Busy's seditious rage against puppet players. Omitting Field's more serious threat of a popular uprising by the 'multitude and people', Busy is reduced to a Quixotic, lone warrior against the fair's idolatries. Nonetheless, this invocation of Puritan sedition in the sphere of the theatre makes clear that Busy's refusal to acknowledge royal authority over the theatre is part and parcel of the more general nonconformist refusal to acknowledge royal authority over things indifferent, also in matters of religion.

To be sure, the following 'disputation' (5.5.24)[193] between Busy and the Puppet Dionysius is nothing 'but hinnying sophistry' (5.5.51).[194] Busy's charge that 'thou hast no calling' (5.5.38) is deflected with specious wordplay:

[188] Dutton, *Licensing, Censorship and Authorship* 9. [189] Creaser, 'Jonson's "Bartholomew Fair"'.
[190] Bancroft 139. Remarkably, Field's son Nathan, whose defence of the theatre I have already cited (see text relating to note 149) and who is explicitly referenced in *Bartholomew Fair* (5.3.67, CEWBJ 4:397), probably played Cokes or Littlewit in early performances of the play and would have heard his father's words cited by Busy on stage. For the fraught dynamic between Jonson as author and Field as actor in *Bartholomew Fair*, see Johnson 57–63.
[191] Bancroft 147. [192] CEWBJ 4:411. [193] Ibid. [194] Ibid. 4:412.

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'*You lie! I am called Dionysius*' (5.5.39).[195] Eventually, the debate over the profanity of the theatre degenerates into a mere shouting match:

PUPPET DIONYSIUS. *It is not profane!*
LEATHERHEAD. It is not profane, he says.
BUSY. It is profane.
PUPPET DIONYSIUS. *It is not profane.*
BUSY. It is profane.
PUPPET DIONYSIUS. *It is not profane.*[196] (5.5.53–8)

Some of Jonson's contemporaries perceived that more was at stake in this disputation than just the theatre. Jonson's friend John Selden read the scene as an allegory of religious controversy: 'Ben Jonson satirically expressed the vain disputes of divines by Rabbi Busy disputing with a puppet in his Bartholomew Fair. It is so: it is not so: it is so: it is not so; crying thus one to another a quarter of an hour together'.[197] Without the lack of an authoritarian decision, there is no way to end the debate: 'One says one thing, and another another; and there is, I say, no measure to end the controversy'.[198] Ever since the dispute between Luther and Erasmus, this had been the classic Catholic argument against the relativist implications of *sola scriptura*.[199] However, Jonson's play suggests that an appeal to royal supremacy might resolve the dispute – if only Busy could acknowledge that the play is 'licensed by authority'. Similarly, Seldon draws explicitly Erastian conclusions from the exegetical impasse which he perceived to be allegorised in the disputation: '*Question*. Whether is the church or the scripture judge of Religion? *Answer*. In truth neither, but the state'.[200] Again, Jonson's submission of the theatre to royal judgement is closely aligned to the claim for royal supremacy over church government.

Nonetheless, Leatherhead/Dionysius eventually does win the debate when he answers the charge that cross-dressing is prohibited by Mosaic Law.[201] As Dionysius points out, puppets do not have a gender, which Dionysius proves when it lifts its garments and cites Gal. 3:28: '*we have*

[195] Ibid. [196] Ibid. 4:413.
[197] Selden 164–5. Selden's account of Jonson's satirical intention is probably well-informed. As already noted, Jonson later changed the name of Inigo Lantern to Lantern Leatherhead. The presence of the former name in Selden's *Table Talk* (164n.17) suggests that Jonson shared an early draft of the play with him.
[198] Selden 164.
[199] Jonson's Jesuit friend Thomas Wright, for instance, makes the same argument in his *Certaine articles or forcible reasons* from 1600 (B2r–B4r).
[200] Selden 162.
[201] 'The woman shal not weare that which perteineth vnto the man, nether shal a man put on womans raiment: for all that do so, are abominacion vnto the Lord thy God' (Deut. 22.5).

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*neither male nor female amongst us*' (5.5.83).[202] It is only then that Busy admits defeat: 'I am confuted; the Cause hath failed me' (5.5.90).[203] Ironically, Dionysius' argument echoes the radicalism of his Puritan opponent, as can be gathered from the full verse which Dionysius cites: 'There is nether Iewe nor Grecian: there is nether bonde nor fre: there is nether male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Iesus' (Gal. 3:28). Just as Busy declares his Christian liberty and refutes the charge of Judaising by eating pig, a practical affirmation of Paul's claim that '[t]here is nether Iewe nor Grecian', the puppet reveals its Christian liberty by lifting its garments, thus demonstrating Paul's claim that 'there is nether male nor female'.[204] In a striking parody of his Puritan opponent, Dionysius goes on to declare that '*I speak by inspiration as well as he*' (5.5.88) and that '*I have as little to do with learning as he*' (5.5.88–9),[205] which is, in a meta-theatrical sense, equally true for the puppet as its transcendence of the gender binary. In this farcical, meta-theatrical appropriation of the Puritans' insistence on Christian liberty and their alleged spiritualism, Jonson reduces Busy's attack on the puppet play *ad absudum*. The Puritan is beaten with his own weapons.[206]

## Compelle Intrare

As I have argued in this chapter, *Bartholomew Fair* draws attention to a considerable overlap between debates on religious conformity and the theatre's legitimacy, insofar as both are concerned with their status in relation to idolatry and Christian liberty. In his deference to the King's 'power to judge' plays, Jonson explicitly spells out with respect to the theatre what he exemplifies with respect to religion throughout the whole play, namely, the need to prevent liberty from degenerating into licentiousness. Moreover, *Bartholomew Fair* establishes a concrete connection

[202] CEWBJ 4:414. [203] Ibid 4:415.

[204] For a reading of the verse as a declaration of Christian liberty, see, for example, Luther's influential commentary on Galatians: 'Wherefore, with these words, There is neither Iew, &c. Paul mightily abolisheth the law . . . Where Christ is put on (saith he,) there is neither Jew, nor circumcision, nor ceremonie of the law any more' (Luther 176r). Unlike his radical offspring (and Dionysius), however, Luther qualifies this egalitarian impulse: 'there is a difference of persons in the lawe and in the worlde, and there it ought to be: but not before God' (168r–v). To the same effect, see also Calvin, *Sermons vpon the Epistle of Saincte Paule to the Galathians* 176r–77r.

[205] CEWBJ 4:414.

[206] However, Jonson took the issue of cross-dressing seriously, as is attested by his later inquiry to Selden concerning 'the literall sense and historicall of the holy text usually brought against the counterfeiting of sexes by apparel' (quoted in Rosenblatt and Schleiner 44). As can be gathered from Selden's reply from 25 February 1616, Deut. 22:5 reflects a prohibition of idolatrous worship that included cross-dressing. See Rosenblatt and Schleiner.

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between the two issues in the person of Busy, who not only arrogates authority to himself in matters of religion in his claims to inspiration and prophecy but also disregards the royal prerogative to license or ban plays in his anti-theatrical riot in the fair. The play's literary politics are thus intricately related to its religious politics.

*Bartholomew Fair* may trivialise many of the concerns about religious dissent voiced by Elizabethan and Jacobean opponents of religious toleration and reproduced in the plays discussed so far. In *Bartholomew Fair*, inward dissent is no longer perceived to be a threat to political stability, and those who make it their business to spy on others, such as Justice Overdo, are ridiculed for their obsession with imaginary seminary priests and other 'enormities'. Self-proclaimed martyrs are not dangerous subversives, but deluded at best. Jonson, one might argue, lowers the stakes of religious conflict by transposing it into a comic register. Nonetheless, I have argued that the inclusive stance of Jonson's comedy has often been mistaken for a tolerant impulse. G. M. Pinciss believes that Jonson propagates a 'liberal position' with 'profounder, Christian implications',[207] and Shuger observes that the play offers a lesson in 'cosmic humility', where 'the hypocrites must throw off their oversized masks and (like true Christians) sit down to dinner with thieves and publicans'.[208] Similarly, Brian Walsh concludes that 'inclusiveness is enabled by a leveling effect produced by the revelation of a spectrum of Puritan behavior, whereby the sins of Puritans are gradually revealed to blend into a more generalized portrait of human misdoing'.[209] However, Quarlous' reminder in *Bartholomew Fair* that even Adam Overdo is but 'flesh and blood' (5.6.80)[210] is not only a gesture of humility but also a means of cutting the Puritans and their Presbyterian ambitions down to size.

Universal fallibility does not justify egalitarian politics. On the contrary, it calls for the strong hand of authority. As Shagan puts it, 'the conformist position was based upon the premise that the Church was incapable of self-restraint and thus had to be moderated externally by magistrates who settled disputes and set firm rules to regulate *adiaphora*'.[211] By the same token, the integrative stance of Overdo's invitation to supper at the end of the play is by no means a reconciliation on equal terms, but requires that the Puritans give up their spleen. The play is thus an instance of Ferrell's observation that Jacobean anti-Puritan polemic 'aimed at silencing the moderate Puritan voice within the Church', and not just 'the extreme

[207] Pinciss 356. [208] Shuger 73. [209] Walsh 41. [210] CEWBJ 4:419.
[211] Shagan, *Rule of Moderation* 112.

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sectarian voices outside it'.[212] The fragile social harmony at the end of *Bartholomew Fair* can likewise only persist if Busy keeps his mouth shut – which he does. The Puritan, who declared earlier that 'I cannot be silent' (3.6.61),[213] does not speak a single line after his defeat.

When Overdo invites the whole company to supper, he cites the Pauline verse (2 Cor. 13:10) that is so crucial to the debate between Puritans and conformists and that James had already quoted in his address to parliament in 1610: '[F]or my intents are *ad correctionem, non ad destructionem*; *ad aedificandum, non ad diruendum*' (5.6.93–4).[214] Edification was the decisive criterion for the Puritans in the question of whether Christian liberty licensed conformity or required a stand of nonconformity. Far from advancing 'an ostensibly generous philosophy of moral healing',[215] the characterisation of the secular magistrate as an agent of edification therefore amounts to an Erastian coup. By claiming edification as the prerogative of the secular magistrate, Overdo and James countermine the nonconformist appeal to edification as a criterion for rejecting royal supremacy. Hence, the Jacobean appeal to edification does not imply 'a more tolerant policy in matters of religion'.[216] On the contrary, James cites Paul in his 1610 speech to Parliament in the context of a reassertion of his royal power, which also includes his right to 'apply sharpe cures, or cut off corrupt members, let blood in what proportion [he] thinkes fit, and as the body may spare'.[217] When James ordered that 'the rotten contagious member', the anti-Trinitarian Bartholomew Legate, 'be cut off from the church of Christ',[218] he demonstrably had no scruples about asserting his right to do so, even if the legality of the procedure was controversial.

If '[t]he social reassimilation of the Puritans in *Bartholomew Fair* offers a more hopeful vision than that found in Jonson's earlier comedy *The Alchemist*',[219] we may therefore have to ask for whom. Much criticism of the play rests on the implicit assumption that 'absolute religious segregation'[220] is a sign of intolerance and that Jonson's alleged 'desire to break down sectarian walls'[221] is, in turn, a tolerant impulse. However, when revisiting the intuitively liberal connotations of terms such as 'Christian liberty' and 'moderation' and recovering their authoritarian

[212] Ferrell 7. [213] CEWBJ 4:356.
[214] CEWBJ 4:420. In the Geneva Bible, Cor. 13:10 is translated as follows: 'Therefore write I these things being absent, lest when I am present, I shulde vse sharpenes, according to the power which the Lord hathe giuen me, to edification, and not to destruction.'
[215] Walsh 53. [216] Pinciss 351. [217] James Stuart, *Political Works* 308.
[218] *Complete Collection of State Trials* 2:734. [219] Preedy, 'Performance' 239. [220] Walsh 54.
[221] Knapp 45.

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ideological uses, *Bartholomew Fair* appears to offer a far more intolerant take on religious dissent than has usually been recognised. The play's ridicule of martyrdom as deluded religious fanaticism with no grounding in a society that has transcended the bloody persecutions of the past is not to be taken at face value, but needs to be understood in the context of Jacobean attempts to devalue Catholic resistance to the Oath of Allegiance. While plays such as *The Jew of Malta* embody an exclusive form of intolerance by demonising, exposing, and punishing dissenters on stage, the intolerance of *Bartholomew Fair* can be characterised as inclusive in its pointed refusal to acknowledge the moral and spiritual stakes of religious dissent and its simultaneous insistence that dissenters be integrated into society at large. If there is a dominating image for the play's religious politics, it is Jesus' banquet parable (Luke 14:12–24), especially his command *compelle intrare* (compel them to come in), which has ever been the watchword of outward conformity since Augustine cited it in his conflict with the Donatists and which is re-enacted in the conclusion of *Bartholomew Fair*.[222]

Despite its inclusive and apparently welcoming character, such hospitality remains a mode of coercion, as Hooker makes all too clear in his application of the banquet parable to religious dissent: 'what cause have wee given the world to thinke that we are not readie . . . to use any good meane of sweet compulsion to have this high and heavenly banquet larglie furnished?'.[223] Indeed, James came to prefer 'sweet compulsion' over the Foucauldian 'liturgy of punishment'.[224] As Busy's conversion in *Bartholomew Fair* suggests, the theatre, with its corrosive effect on nonconformity, might just be such a form of 'sweet compulsion' – a form of non-violent social discipline that undermines its spectators' inward sovereignty even while appealing to an inclusive sense of liberty from Puritan stricture. Fittingly, therefore, Bartholomew Cokes wishes to 'ha' the rest o' the play' (5.6.95)[225] in the communal and inclusive setting of Overdo's edifying dinner party, who 'will have none fear to go along' (5.6.92–3).[226] And, since *Bartholomew Fair* is a comedy, go along they must.

[222] See Brown. For early modern reproductions of Augustine's argumentation, see also Bunny 23–6; Sandys 192; Savage 110–12.
[223] Hooker 2:356. [224] Foucault 49. [225] CEWBJ 4:420. [226] Ibid.

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# *Conclusion*

As John Jeffries Martin argues in *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (2004), the Reformation was instrumental in the rise in the sixteenth century of a new ideal of sincerity that 'made the revealing of one's beliefs and convictions a matter of great urgency, even an ethical imperative'.[1] This imperative of sincerity is arguably not to be understood exclusively in terms of a burgeoning sense of individualism but also in the light of post-Reformation religious pluralism and its concomitant emphasis on confessional group identities. In an age of competing versions of Christianity, proclaiming the truth of the Gospel and taking sides in the great religious debates of the day gained unprecedented urgency. This imperative to be truthful manifested itself, in its most radical form, in martyrdom and the martyrological literature which it inspired on both sides of the confessional divide, but also in stern warnings against the dangers of outward conformity, or Nicodemism, as it was frequently called by Protestant theologians of the period. As many English preachers and theologians declared, Nicodemism was the sin against the holy Ghost that cannot be pardoned, or even a symptom of reprobation.[2] Being truthful was not only a matter of life and death; it was a matter of salvation and damnation. And yet, in post-Reformation Europe, dissimulation was as universally practised as it was condemned.

Religious dissimulation was firmly anchored in the Elizabethan and Jacobean life-world, ranging from clandestine religious lay movements, such as the spiritualist Family of Love, and Catholic conformists over members of the clergy, such as the many Marian priests who compromised with the Elizabethan settlement at the onset of her reign, to the highest social echelons and even Queen Elizabeth, the 'arch-Nicodemite of magisterial Protestantism'.[3] During the reign of her Catholic sister Mary,

[1] Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* 38. [2] Gunther, *Reformation Unbound* 103–4.
[3] MacCulloch, *Silence* 182.



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Elizabeth was, as William Camden puts it, 'gouerning her selfe as it were a ship in a stormy weather, heard diuine Seruice after the Romish Religion, and was often confessed, yea at the rigorous sollicitation of Cardinall Poole, professed her selfe for feare of death a Romish Catholicke'.[4] However, this is not how Elizabeth was usually remembered.

Those who were keen to celebrate the Queen after her death tended to drastically rewrite her conduct during her house arrest and imprisonment under Mary. The poet and prose writer Nicholas Breton, for instance, recounts in his 'Character of Elizabeth' how 'for her love to the word of god' she 'was persecuted by the devills of the world' and 'tost from piller to post, imprisoned, sought to be put to death, yea and disgraciouslie vsed even by them that were not worthy to serve her'.[5] As Breton claims, Elizabeth was suffering for the Protestant faith, and in this faith she never wavered: 'was shee not as she wrote herself semper eadem alwaies one? Zealous in one religion, believinge in one god, constant in one truth?'.[6] The Nicodemite Queen thus paradoxically became an icon of uncompromising Protestantism that was frequently held up as an unflattering mirror to her more ecumenically inclined successor. This view of Elizabeth was also perpetrated in dramatic renderings of her life and reign in the years following her death.[7] In Thomas Heywood's biographical history play *1 If You Know Not Me, You Know Nobody* (1605), which dramatises Elizabeth's imprisonment during her sister's reign, the future monarch fully expects to die '[a] Virgine and a Martyr both' (l. 342) and narrowly escapes this fate only through supernatural intervention. In a dumbshow, two angels miraculously drive back a friar, who is apparently charged by the notorious persecutor Stephen Gardiner to kill the princess in her sleep, and place an English Bible into her hands (ll. 1048–67). In Heywood's play, Elizabeth is not a Nicodemite but a virtual martyr, whose heroic death is forestalled only by divine providence. Rather than admitting, let alone justifying, Elizabeth's conformity as a prudent, or at least excusable, course of action under political duress, Heywood celebrates the Queen's alleged constancy in her Protestant faith.

The aim of this book has been to explore the political and religious pressures that could produce such a distortion of history and the ways in which these pressures shaped early modern drama. The discrepancy between the widespread condemnation of religious dissimulation and its equally widespread practice reveals a fundamental tension in early

[4] Camden 9. [5] Breton 5. [6] Ibid.
[7] For Elizabeth's dramatic afterlife, see Dobson and Watson 43–78.

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modern religious life that had a counterpart in the theatre, which was wrestling with similar contradictions. While dissimulation was the foundation of the theatre, its legitimacy was by no means taken for granted, neither by the critics of the theatre nor by its practitioners, and was often viewed with deep suspicion and ambivalence. As I have argued in this book, debates on the legitimacy of theatrical dissimulation were inextricably bound up with debates on religious dissimulation. Both discourses were informed by the same questions concerning the relationship between inwardness and outwardness, idolatry, spiritual and moral pollution, and the Pauline theology of things indifferent. When religious dissimulation was represented on stage, it did not only bring one of the most pressing ethical dilemmas of the period to the forefront. In staging religious dissimulation, the theatre also inevitably addressed its own moral and religious status.

In *Mixed Faith and Shared Feeling: Theater in Post-Reformation London* (2018), Musa Gurnis has shown that the professional stage in early modern London was capable of giving voice to a multitude of confessional perspectives. The six case studies of this book are attuned to this confessional heterogeneity of the Elizabethan and Jacobean commercial stage and further suggest that this religious diversity is also reflected in a wide variety of conceptions of theatricality that can be related to different attitudes towards religious nonconformity and dissimulation, respectively. In short, even though contemporaries perceived close connections between theatrical and religious dissimulation, the theatre did not imply one particular stance towards religious dissimulation but was a highly malleable medium that could be put to the service of many different religio-political agendas.

As I have argued in my reading of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays in Chapter 2, the theatre could be aligned with the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity, that is, the Queen's alleged refusal to sound the depths of her subjects' conscience. Shakespeare's Falstaff, in contrast to his historical model the Lollard martyr John Oldcastle, not only embodies the political quietism and willingness to dissemble that was expected from religious dissenters under Queen Elizabeth but also revalues dissimulation both as a life-giving principle and as *raison d'être* of the theatre. With his consistent refusal to distinguish between being and seeming, between life and mimesis, Falstaff is fashioned as an anti-martyr as well as an embodiment of theatricality, who refuses to privilege sincerity over dissimulation and highlights how the two are constantly interwoven.

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However, while Jeffrey Knapp has suggested that there was a natural alliance between the theatre and the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity, it is worth pointing out that the stage could also be a vehicle for a Puritan nonconformist agenda.[8] As I have shown in Chapter 3, *1 Sir John Oldcastle* takes issue with Shakespeare's rewriting of Oldcastle and not only restores the proto-Protestant martyr to his former glory but also refashions him as a model for Elizabethan Puritan dissent. However, the play betrays substantial unease with dissimulation, which is projected on the play's Catholic villains, while Oldcastle is largely stripped of Falstaff's playful theatricality. Oldcastle too dissembles, but when he does so in order to spy on a conspiracy in the making, his aim is not to conceal but to reveal treason. The same rationale underlies the play's vision of theatricality. The self-conscious theatricality of the play's villains is not simply to be understood as an indictment of the theatre as the breeding ground of dangerous dissimulation; it also highlights the theatre's ability to expose dissimulation and to instruct audiences not to trust appearances.

Catholic sensibilities, too, continued to be expressed on the commercial stage, as has been amply demonstrated by scholarship under the auspices of the so-called religious turn. Shakespeare, for instance, has been credited with an incarnational aesthetic that survived Protestant iconoclasm or a profound engagement with the sacrament of confession in his late plays.[9] However, the relationship between Catholicism and theatricality was not simply a matter of sacramental nostalgia or theatrical appropriation of pre-Reformation rituals and modes of representation. In Chapter 4, I have read *Sir Thomas More* and its dramatisation of More's political downfall in the light of the moral dilemmas of Elizabethan Catholics, who wished to keep their faith to themselves as loyal subjects but were forced to declare themselves vis-à-vis a Protestant state that regarded Catholic secrecy with deep suspicion. Silence, as a middle ground between sincerity and deception, became an increasingly untenable position at a time when the political stakes of religious dissent were raised by fears of a foreign invasion and assassination plots. Intriguingly, the play explores the seemingly paradoxical relationship between a recusant ethos of martyrdom and theatricality in a protagonist who is a passionate role-player but simultaneously refuses to lie about his most cherished beliefs and convictions. As the play suggests in its portrayal of More's martyrdom, which is coded in

[8] Compare with Knapp.
[9] See, for example, Beckwith; Groves, *Texts and Traditions*, especially ch. 2.

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explicitly theatrical terms, nonconformity can be just as profoundly performative as religious dissimulation.

However, it would be misleading to assume that Catholic recusants consistently viewed the theatre more favourably than Puritan nonconformists. Ben Jonson's Roman tragedy *Sejanus His Fall*, which I have discussed in Chapter 5, is a case in point. What Jonson's play shares with *Sir Thomas More* is a critique of late Elizabethan attempts to access the inwardness of Catholic dissenters. This critique, however, is translated back into the factional conflicts of the early Roman Empire. At least in this classical setting, Jonson seems less concerned with theological arguments about dissimulation than with neo-Stoicist conceptions of selfhood as a model for the split between inward and outward self which persecution forced on dissenters such as Jonson himself, who had adopted the Catholic faith in the late 1590s. That being said, Jonson's play is sceptical about dissimulation, which is portrayed not only as an instrument of self-protection in the treacherous world of the early Roman Empire but also as a weapon in the hands of the tyrannical emperor Tiberius and his ill-fated favourite Sejanus. Even more, their political style is portrayed as deeply theatrical and condemned as such in the play – in contrast to *Sir Thomas More*, where theatrical self-dramatisation is the dissenter's privilege. *Sejanus* is thus indicative of Jonson's notorious scruples concerning theatrical representation. Nonetheless, it is important to stress that these scruples do not necessarily imply an unconditional ethos of sincerity on the part of persecuted dissenters. Jonson's views on sincerity thus gain considerably in complexity and ambivalence when his well-known views on theatricality are juxtaposed with his attitude towards religious dissimulation.

I have argued in Chapter 3 on *1 John Oldcastle* that concerns about dissimulation could be mitigated by flaunting the theatre's ability to expose and analyse dissimulation with a meta-theatrical insistence on its own status as mere representation. This ethos of exposure could also reinforce government propaganda *against* religious dissenters, as I have illustrated with my reading of Marlowe's *Jew of Malta* in Chapter 6. In the 1580s and 1590s, the Elizabethan government intensified its attempts to ferret out the treasonous designs of supposedly dissembling Catholics and Puritans alike. Dramatists such as Marlowe followed suit by portraying religious dissenters as deliberately theatrical characters and by showcasing the theatre's ability to reveal, at least on stage, the dangerous secrets of religious dissenters. Thus, a number of Marlowe's

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innovative dramatic techniques of disclosure, such as his sophisticated use of audience address in soliloquies and asides or his contribution to the character type of the stage Machiavel, can be related to an obsessive fascination with the supposedly subversive dissimulation of religious dissenters and a desire to render transparent their hidden iniquity.

Finally, the theatre could also be considered an ally in the project of establishing confessional unity in more inclusive ways, as is suggested by Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, written after his re-conversion to the Church of England. Jonson's comedy mostly sidesteps any sensationalist claims to expose the inward self of religious dissenters and suggests that the age of bloody persecution is over. Rather than isolating and exposing religious dissemblers, Jonson's comic dramaturgy tends towards inclusion. Nonetheless, the play retains an intolerant dimension insofar as it devalues principled dissent as sectarian delusion. In addition, the social assimilation of the Puritan Busy-Zeal-of-the-Land at the play's eponymous fair, which culminates in his conversion during a puppet play, suggests that the theatre might ultimately also function as an institution that erases differences by transforming its spectators and undermining their nonconformist identities against their will.

In the light of such diverse approaches to religious dissent and dissimulation, it is difficult to give a meaningful answer to the question of whether the early modern theatre generally promoted religious toleration and toleration for religious dissimulation, or whether it rather reinforced confessional prejudice and the rhetoric of hate and paranoia that was so prevalent in contemporary religious polemics. The theatre was not a single, homogeneous institution but a heterogeneous multiplicity of different playhouses, companies, patrons, playwrights, actors, and shareholders, who could differ significantly in their religious attachments, commercial interests, marketing strategies, and aesthetic preferences, so any generalising answer will inevitably be inadequate. That being said, it might nonetheless be worthwhile to attempt to take stock and consider the role of the theatre in early modern cultures of religious coexistence more generally.

On a spectrum from toleration to persecution, scholars such as Jeffrey Knapp, B. J. Sokol, and, most recently, Brian Walsh have tended to place the theatre rather on the tolerant side.[10] Walsh, for instance, states

[10] Knapp; Sokol; Walsh.

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that '[d]espite the many ways Puritans are mocked or generally "othered" on stage, in the end these plays that feature godly characters offer an integrationist rather than an exclusionary approach to the problem religious dissenters posed for English society'.[11] While such integration is often precarious, Walsh nonetheless concludes that 'the clash of intra-Christian religious others that was intermittently staged from the late 1590s through the middle Jacobean years tended to yield troubled comedy and tragio-comedy, rather than tragedy'.[12] However, Walsh's observations also raise questions concerning the role of generic expectations and conventions in shaping the representation of religious conflict.

This book covers a similar time period as Walsh's *Unsettled Toleration* but yields a darker picture of the theatre's representation of religious conflict, which is, among other things, a consequence of its somewhat different generic focus. Puritans, for instance, were mocked not only as deluded but ultimately harmless hypocrites in comedies from the late 1590s onwards. Anti-Puritan satire made its debut on stage earlier than that, in history plays such as Marlowe's *Edward II* or generic hybrids such as *The Jew of Malta*, which represent Puritanism as a far more serious threat to the social and political order. While the stage Puritan of later comedies is frequently reconciled to society at large, albeit often in an uneasy truce, the same does not hold true for the stage Machiavel of the early 1590s, who could serve as a vehicle for a more vicious type of anti-Puritan satire than the comparably harmless stage Puritan.

Even in comedy, the social integration of Puritans, if at all successful, may come at the cost of their confessional identity, as is the case with Zeal-of-the-Land Busy in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*. After his 'conversion', the otherwise so loquacious Busy falls entirely silent. Can one really speak of toleration if its precondition is that dissenters give up their distinct identity? The question poses itself with even greater urgency in a play like Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, which is classified as a comedy in the First Folio and characterised as a 'comicall History' in Q1 (A2r), but strains the principle of comic inclusion to the breaking point. Like Busy, Shylock remains silent after his conversion for the rest of the play, which not only raises obvious doubts about Shylock's commitment to his new faith but also makes clear that the inclusive impetus of comedy is by no means

[11] Walsh 11. [12] Ibid. 190.

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inherently tolerant, especially if we conceive of toleration as an acceptance of real diversity.

It is fundamentally problematic to consider social integration, by default, as the touchstone of successful toleration. Imposing such an ideal of communality on dissenters themselves is liable to lead to anachronistic distortions. Catholic and Protestant minorities alike often placed great importance on limiting social contact with those whom they perceived as heretics and were keen to dramatise their difference from them. A number of plays from the period, which give voice to Puritan or Catholic rather than establishment perspectives on religious conflict, may not be quite so radical in their emphasis on social segregation, but are still far from propagating social integration. The protagonists of plays such as *1 Oldcastle* and *Sir Thomas More* yearn, above all, to follow the dictates of their conscience. They may be at pains to assert the compatibility of their religious dissent with political loyalty, but otherwise do not seem to concern themselves greatly with social acceptance. *1 Oldcastle* is at best ambivalent about the ideal of good fellowship, which according to Knapp undergirded the theatre's inclusive outlook.[13] The disgraced protagonist of *Sir Thomas More* even ends up cherishing his social isolation and detachment from the political world, in which he previously moved with such ease and grace. If anything, social and ecclesiastical integration was not the aim of religious dissenters, but the aim of the Established Church, as formulated by Richard Hooker, who insisted that 'it is and must be the Churches care that all maie in outward conformitie be one'[14] and that dissenters should not be able 'to winde them selves out of law and to continewe the same they were'.[15] Hence, the representation and resolution of religious conflict in the register of comedy is by no means necessarily an expression of a tolerant mindset. On the contrary, comedies such as *Bartholomew Fair* rather reflect the policies of coercive inclusion that guided much of Elizabethan and Jacobean ecclesiastical politics.

Nonetheless, the theatre could also lower the potential for conflict in religious difference with meta-theatrical gestures that de-emphasised moral and theological absolutes and instead highlighted the deliberate artificiality and entertainment value of the theatre's modes of representation. In doing so, the theatre could translate religious and political tensions into aesthetic energy, as is suggested with helpful clarity in the

[13] Knapp 23–57. [14] Hooker 2:352. [15] Ibid. 2:353.

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exchange between Cassius and Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* after the assassination of the supposed tyrant:

CASSIUS. … How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn and accents yet unknown?
BRUTUS. How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport
That now on Pompey's basis lies along,
No worthier than dust? (3.1.111–16)

A similar, at least partial transformation of politics into aesthetics, of bloody violence into entertaining 'sport', is arguably also at work in the transformation of Oldcastle into Falstaff. In Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays, the acrimonious historiographical debate about Oldcastle and his martyrdom or dissimulation, respectively, which polarised Catholics, conformists, and Puritans throughout the sixteenth century, is not polemically amplified through the popular medium of the theatre but primarily exploited as raw material for theatrical illusion and entertainment. The theatre could thus be an agent of trivialisation that temporarily unified confessionally heterogenous audiences in a shared aesthetic experience in London's bourgeoning entertainment industry and consumer culture.[16]

To be clear, the reconciliatory potential of such aesthetic experiences should not be overstated when considering, for instance, the ease with which Marlowe's plays could be instrumentalised in xenophobic fantasies of massacring continental fellow-Protestants who had fled from persecution in their homeland. Jonson, too, seems deeply suspicious of the ways in which the theatre can stir its audiences to frenetic excitement and even violence, as is suggested by the deliberately theatrical terms in which the dismemberment of Sejanus at the hands of a delirious mob is reported in *Sejanus His Fall*. Nonetheless, Jonson is heavily invested in a trivialisation of religious conflict in a self-consciously meta-theatrical register in *Bartholomew Fair*. In Jonson's comedy, the Gunpowder Plot or the destruction of Jerusalem do not stand for the looming spectre of murderous religious violence, threatening to break out at any moment, but have been reduced to the subject matter of a puppet play. The Puritan Busy is not trying to take down the monarchy or the Church of England, but has chosen a more modest target, namely, the damnable trade of the puppet theatre.

[16] On the potentially reconciliatory aspects of such theatrical communities, see Sterret, especially ch. 7.

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Jonson also exploits the theatrical nature of Puritanism itself when he playfully likens alleged Puritan shibboleths to the mechanics of theatrical representation in the debate on the theatre between Busy and the puppet Dionysius. Just as Puritans allegedly claimed to be merely a mouthpiece for divine inspiration, puppets do not speak for themselves, and just as Puritans insisted on their Christian liberty that transcends secular social and biological categories, the puppets are equally unmoored from such restrictive markers of identity as gender, as Dionysius demonstrates by lifting its garments. Although I have put a spotlight on the coercive and authoritarian aspects of the play, Jonson ultimately does something similar in *Bartholomew Fair* to what Shakespeare does with Falstaff, when he repeatedly exploits religio-political conflicts and debates for theatrical purposes. That is to say, he reconsiders Puritanism from an aesthetic point of view and acknowledges, at least for a fragile moment, its mimetic kinship with the theatre and the extent to which his own dramatic art is animated by the religious and political tensions for which Puritans came to stand in a culture that simultaneously condemned and practised dissimulation with such high stakes. Jonson is certainly keener than Shakespeare to break the spell again by insisting on a fundamental opposition between Puritanism and the theatre and by projecting unease with dissimulation on his godly scapegoats, but the theatrical vitality of his anti-Puritan satire is always liable to subvert this opposition.

The process which I am describing here may recall Stephen Greenblatt's circulation of social energy, an attempt to explain how the early modern theatre harnessed the tensions of its ideological contexts and material circumstances for its enduring aesthetic appeal.[17] However, there are also differences. With regard to religion, Greenblatt famously argues in his essay on 'Shakespeare and the Exorcists', the transformation effected by the stage was primarily one of ontological erosion, an 'emptying out' of faith.[18] According to Greenblatt, the theatrical representation of religious ritual would have been perceived by the English Protestant establishment as an 'external and trivialized staging of what should be deeply inward; the tawdry triumph of spectacle over reason; the evacuation of the divine presence from religious mystery, leaving only vivid but empty ceremonies; the transformation of faith into bad faith'.[19] The common New Historicist assumption that the early modern theatre was therefore by and large a secular or secularising institution has been widely

[17] See Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, especially ch. 1. [18] Ibid. ch. 4. [19] Ibid. 113.

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discussed and challenged over the last two decades.[20] However, I take issue not so much with the question of whether the theatre could function as a medium of religious experience, or whether it allowed for the presence of the sacred on stage in any meaningful way, but rather with the imperative of sincerity that Greenblatt takes for granted, the assumption that, for the early moderns, 'the difference between true and false religion is the presence of theater'.[21]

In a culture that was as deeply saturated with religious dissimulation as that of early modern England, Greenblatt's claim that '[p]erformance kills belief' is to be qualified.[22] '[B]ad faith', as characterised by inward disengagement and 'empty ceremonies',[23] was not necessarily a symptom of an incipient process of secularisation. It was a consequence of intolerance, a practice adopted by Catholics as well as radical Protestants who were not free to practise their faith openly but were forced to conform to a state-imposed religion. Acknowledging the omnipresence of such religious dissimulation in early modern religious life yields fresh perspectives on the political, ethical, and religious implications of staging faith, beyond the frequently rehearsed scholarly distinction between the supposedly secularising effect of theatrical illusion on the one hand and the more recent insistence on the continued presence of the sacred on stage on the other.

This is not to say that the theatre was an institution that was by default tolerant of religious dissent and religious dissimulation. My point is rather that the early modern stage could engage in complex and manifold cultural transactions that ran the whole gamut of contemporary attitudes towards religious dissent and dissimulation. So much has become evident even from a relatively circumscribed analysis of commercial drama from c. 1590 to 1614, a period in which the Elizabethan settlement often looked unstable and seemed to be threatened by competing visions of religious reform. The theatre could thrive on paranoia about the secret inwardness of supposedly treasonous dissenters, but it could also align itself with the Elizabethan policy of outward conformity and even offer a sympathetic portrayal of the moral plight of Puritans as well as Catholics, who faced a choice between denying their faith or suffering adverse consequences for the sake of their conscience. In all these cases, however, the phenomenon of religious dissimulation stimulated self-reflection on the nature of theatrical representation and its political and religious significance.

[20] For a programmatic challenge to the secularisation thesis, see Jackson and Marotti.
[21] Greenblatt 126. [22] Ibid. 109. [23] Ibid. 113.

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The theatre's kinship with one of the most controversial practices in the religious life-world of early modern England thus means that any account of early modern theatricality and the controversies surrounding it will profit from situating the theatre in a religious culture that forced many of its members to dissemble their true beliefs. By the same token, any account of religious dissimulation in early modern England will be enriched by considering the theatre's unceasing reflections on what it means to pretend to be someone else.

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