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 known 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]

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[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.

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[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.

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

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[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'.

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

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[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.

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.

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[17] CWE 76:117.

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,

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

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]

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[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

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

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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*.

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

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[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.

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

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[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.

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

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[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.

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

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[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.

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 only 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

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[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

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 *exempla* 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

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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.

'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

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[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.

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

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

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.

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

> 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.

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[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.

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

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[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.

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

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[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.

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

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

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

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

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[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.

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

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[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.

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.

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