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RELIGION AND RESTORATION DRAMA
THE NEW PLAYS OF 1660-1720

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Aphra Behn is a key figure in this thesis, and I am grateful to Elaine Hobby and Claire Bowditch (*Editing Aphra Behn in the Digital Age*) for motivating me to look closer at the work of this extraordinary writer, and for their continuing interest in my work.

Finally, I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Glynis, who has provided uncomplaining support while I have been spending so much time with characters from the past who she refers to (affectionately, I hope) as 'the deads'. This thesis is dedicated to her, with love.

Declaration

This thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university. No part of this thesis has been published prior to the date of submission, except for some material that was published in my chapter 'The clergy and marriage in Restoration Comedies', in *Religion and life cycles in early modern England*, eds. Caroline Bowden, Emily Vine and Tessa Whitehouse (Manchester University Press, October 2021).

Abbreviations

BM	British Museum.
CODCC	The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church.
NPG	National Portrait Gallery
ODNB Online	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online)
OED	Oxford English Dictionary

Abstract

One of the most distinctive features of the changing religious and cultural landscape in England between 1660 and 1720 was the reopening of the public theatres, after their closure in 1642. This reawakening generated a rich repertoire of new plays. This thesis seeks to examine how these plays treated religion, broadly conceived, and what they tell us about both drama and attitudes to religious institutions and faith. Religion was one of the most ubiquitous issues of the period and the stage was one of its most striking cultural representations. This thesis brings together for the first time these two fundamental elements of life in England over the whole of the long Restoration period.

Many new plays of the period engaged with religious issues and included in their cast lists a wide range of religious characters, both clerical and lay. This thesis will show that most of these characters are shown in a negative light. Many of these portrayals were used to attack specific religious groups at times of conflict, but the relative absence of positive religious portrayals means that any counterbalancing force is limited. The remorselessness of these negative portrayals raises the question of the attitude shown in these plays to religion in general. The central argument of this thesis is that the dramatists' attitude to religion was, at the very least, either intentionally or carelessly disrespectful. In some cases, there is evidence of what one of the characters calls 'a damn'd Atheistical Age'.

Note to the reader

- Historians offer a wide range of labels for the government of the 1650s and the people who held power in that period. None of these labels are ideal, and I have chosen to use derivatives of the word ‘republic’.

- As the term ‘Anglican’ would be anachronistic, adherents to the Church of England are described as ‘conformists’. The terms ‘nonconformist’ and ‘dissenter’ are used interchangeably to describe those Protestants who did not conform to the Church of England.

- Most of the primary sources cited in this thesis have been accessed online, primarily at https://www.proquest.com/ and GALE PRIMARY SOURCES: Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Footnotes and the bibliography cite the details for the original publications. Online references were double-checked between 7 April and 18 May 2023.

- Quotations have been mostly left with the original spelling, capitalisation, and punctuation, but some minor changes have been made.

- The dates attributed to plays in the main text are the earlier of the date of first performance or the date of publication. In the footnotes and bibliography, the date of publication is given.

- The period covered by this thesis is 1660 to 1720. For simplicity, throughout the thesis, the word ‘period’ means 1660 to 1720, unless otherwise stated. Dates are based on the Julian calendar, but years are taken to begin on 1st January.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the most distinctive features of the changing religious and cultural landscape in England between 1660 and 1720 was the reopening of the public theatres, after their closure in 1642. This reawakening generated a rich repertoire of new plays.[1] This thesis seeks to examine how these plays treated religion, broadly conceived, and what they tell us about both drama and attitudes to religious institutions and faith. Literary scholars have analysed these plays for their political, social, and cultural importance, and religion has been reflected to some extent in this work, but the plays have not been studied primarily through a religious lens. Also, historians have researched and written in depth about religion in this period, but drama has only featured in a minor way as one of many sources. Religion was one of the most ubiquitous issues of the period and the stage was one of its most striking cultural representations. This thesis brings together for the first time these two fundamental elements of life in England through the whole of the long Restoration period.

Many new plays of the period engaged with religious issues and included in their cast lists a wide range of religious characters, both clerical and lay.[2] This thesis will show that most of these characters are shown in a negative light. Many of these portrayals were used to attack specific religious groups at times of conflict, but the relative absence of positive religious portrayals means that any counterbalancing force is limited. The remorselessness of these negative portrayals raises the question of the attitude shown in these plays to religion in general. The central argument of this thesis is that the dramatists' attitude to religion was, at the very least, either intentionally or carelessly disrespectful and, in some cases, it shaded into irreligion or a manifestation of what one character calls 'a damn'd Atheistical Age'.[3] Religion was deeply embedded in the life and minds of the people of England in this period, so it would not be credible to argue that it could be undermined by the plays, but it is feasible that religious attitudes could be unsettled by the experience of watching a play in the intense atmosphere of a theatre or reading a printed play text in private.

This thesis presents religion as a significant factor in many of the new plays of the period, although not perhaps an ideological or theological one, and not necessarily included from a position of faith. Justin Champion has observed that 'Religious belief was a complex fabric of doctrine, devotion and institution.'[4] There is little doctrine in the plays, and the devotion that can be seen is all too often corrupted by the religious characters we meet. The religious focus of the plays is usually on the institutions, and particularly on their representatives and adherents – most of whom bring their institutions into disrepute. I agree with Robert Hume's argument that the playwrights didn't 'put much Christianity into the plays' and that 'religion is rarely an important ideological factor in this drama.'[5] I also agree with Jessica Munns who argues that there are few characters in the plays who express 'very sincere or fervent religious views'.[6] In the 1970s, however, Aubrey Williams argued strongly that Restoration playwrights and audiences shared a common knowledge and understanding of the Christian religion, but that this has been ignored by modern critics. He borrows from an anonymous 1698 pamphlet (possibly written by a playwright) to make his point – 'Our Plays are no Heathen Compositions; our Authors and Auditors profess one Faith'.[7] Williams disagrees with modern scholars who argue that the plays reflect a society that is 'predominantly cynical, sexually nasty, emotionally bankrupt.' He sees this argument as a distraction from the complexities of the plays and life in general. He believes that the playwrights held a providential view of the world and that 'fallen human nature is forgivable and redeemable'.[8] I do not dispute his view about the complexities of the plays and the shared Christian upbringing, but I believe that these factors are not incompatible with the writing of 'cynical, sexually nasty', and potentially 'heathen' plays. Also, a Christian upbringing does not preclude a later lapse into a disrespectful attitude towards religion. As Thomas Sprat wrote in 1667, 'The influence which Christianity once obtain'd on men's minds is now prodigiously decay'd.'[9] Hume also argues that the dramatists 'did not write plays essentially hostile to a Christian view of the world.'[10] I agree that calling their attitude 'hostile' would be an exaggeration, but I will argue that the evidence in the plays shows that they seemed unconcerned about the damage that their plays might do to the Christian world view in the eyes and minds of their audiences and readers.

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[1] See section 1.1 for further explanation of the selection of plays researched.

[2] See section 1.1 for some statistics on this point.

[3] John Vanbrugh, *The provok'd wife* (London, 1697), p. 62.

[4] J. A. I. Champion, *The pillars of priestcraft shaken : the Church of England and its enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 9.

The centrality of religion in the life and politics of the period has been extensively debated by historians. Jonathan Scott rejects what he sees as the demotion of religion by earlier Whig and Marxist historians who saw the fear of popery and arbitrary government -

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[5] Robert D. Hume, *The rakish stage: studies in English drama, 1660-1800* (Carbondale, 1983), p. 19.

[6] Jessica Munns, 'Change, skepticism, and uncertainty' in Deborah Payne Fisk, *The Cambridge companion to English Restoration theatre* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 154.

[7] Aubrey Williams, 'Of "One faith": Authors and auditors in the Restoration Theatre', *Studies in the Literary Imagination,* 10 (1977), pp. 57-76, pp. 57-8; Anonymous, *A defence of dramatick poetry being a review of Mr Collier's view of the immorality and profaneness of the stage* (London, 1698), p. 67. The pamphlet was published anonymously, but Williams reports that it has now been attributed to the playwright Elkanah Settle.

[8] Williams, 'Of 'One Faith'', pp. 65, 76.

[9] Thomas Sprat, *The history of the Royal-Society of London for the improving of natural knowledge* (London, 1667), p. 376.

[10] Hume, *Rakish stage*, p. 19.

one of the central concerns of the age - as primarily a political issue. For Scott, and others, the crises caused by this fear were ‘fundamentally about religion’.[11] For example, W. A. Speck argues that James II was ejected in 1688 because of his Catholicism, not his arbitrary rule.[12] Steve Pincus disputes this interpretation and argues that, while religion remained an important issue in political life, ‘it had ceased to dominate it.’[13] Mark Knights argues that religion ‘continued to be a core element in shaping political allegiances’ but as one of a number of factors.[14] Grant Tapsell believes that religion can be seen as ‘permeating the most important events that gave shape and meaning to later seventeenth-century affairs’.[15] I believe that the evidence in the plays shows that, although religion did not dominate political and cultural life in this period, it certainly permeated it.

1.1 Thesis structure and methodology

The structure of this thesis is mostly denominational with chapters on nonconformity, Catholicism, the Church of England, religions beyond Christianity, and atheism – an issue of particular importance to the central argument of the thesis. Before this denominational analysis, there is a chapter exploring the place of drama in wider society. Before the conclusion there is a case study of a single play – *The Lancashire Witches* (1681) by Thomas Shadwell. This play pulls together many of the main themes of thesis and was written at a key turning point in the religious history of the period. The other reason for choosing this play is that, in my sampling and scoring system (see below), it scored higher than all the other plays in the database except one (*The Folly of Priestcraft* explored in section 4.2).

I have chosen 1660 as a starting point, as this was when Charles II granted licences for the creation of theatre companies, following the restoration of the monarchy and the Church of England. The choice of an end-date is less simple. There is no consensus about when the ‘Restoration’ ended. The ‘late Stuart age’ ended in 1714 with the death of Queen Anne, but I have continued my analysis through to 1720 for two reasons. There are some plays that engaged with religion in interesting ways in the first few years of the Hanoverian age, and 1719 saw the repeal of the *Schism Act* and the *Occasional Conformity Act*. It would be an exaggeration to say that these repeals brought religious conflict in England to an end, but they helped to take some of the sting out of the issue.[16]

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[11] Jonathan Scott, ‘England’s Troubles: Exhuming the Popish Plot’ in Tim Harris, Paul Seaward and Mark Goldie (ed), *The Politics of religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990), p. 110.

[12] W. A. Speck, *Reluctant revolutionaries : Englishmen and the revolution of 1688* (Oxford, 1988), p. 233.

[13] Steve Pincus, *1688 : The first modern revolution* (New Haven, 2009), p. 94.

[14] Mark Knights, ‘”Meer religion” and the “church-state” of Restoration England: the impact and ideology of James II’s declarations of indulgence in Alan Craig Houston and Steven C. A. Pincus (ed), *A nation transformed : England after the Restoration* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 43.

[15] Grant Tapsell, ‘Religion and the Government of the Later Stuarts’ in Andrew Hiscock and Helen Wilcox (ed), *The Oxford handbook of early modern English literature and religion* (Oxford, 2017), p. 104.

At the start of my project, I built a database of all the new plays I could identify that were written during this sixty-year period. This database includes just over seven hundred plays so, to make the project manageable, I devised a sampling and scoring system to help me to identify the plays that were likely to be the most fruitful for detailed research. The factors considered included:

- The 'Front matter' – dedications, letters to the reader, prologues, and epilogues.
- The cast lists.
- Commentary on religious matters in *English Drama 1660-1700* by Derek Hughes – a comprehensive analysis of all the plays written between those dates.[17]
- Commentary by other scholars on religious matters in the plays.
- Plays that were attacked on religious grounds in works by Jeremy Collier and Arthur Bedford during the anti-theatricality controversy that began in 1698[18]; the controversy will be examined in section 2.3.
- Key word-counts using the drama section of *Literature Online*[19].
- Useful quotations from the plays found whilst compiling data for the other factors.

Approximately one hundred of the seven hundred plays produced a score that indicated that religion was a feature of the play, and most of these plays are referenced in the thesis.

There are also just over fifty dramatists cited in the thesis. Some brief biographical information will be given for the key individuals as their plays are introduced. This information will show a range of religious and political standpoints - some dramatists' views were well-known and they stuck to them throughout the period, while some underwent a significant change – most notably the Poet Laureate John Dryden, who converted to Catholicism. The views of others can be generously described as flexible. For example, John Crowne wrote plays under three monarchs and his attitude to politics and religion depended entirely on who was in power – as Adrian Streete observes, he was a ‘political chameleon’.[20] Many of the dramatists were well-connected to the highest levels in society – the Court Wits were close to Charles II; five of the playwrights cited were Poet Laureate, either during or after the period; Sir John Vanbrugh was a prominent architect with highly-placed clients; and Aphra Behn was a spy.

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[16] Geoffrey S. Holmes, *The making of a great power : late Stuart and early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (London, 1993), p. 350.

[17] Derek Hughes, *English drama, 1660-1700* (Oxford, 1996).

[18] Jeremy Collier, *A short view of the immorality, and profaneness of the English stage together with the sense of antiquity upon this argument* (London, 1698); Arthur Bedford, *The evil and danger of stage-plays: shewing their natural tendency to destroy religion, and introduce a general corruption of manners* (Bristol, 1706).

[19] The key words (with derivates) were religion, hypocrisy, oaths, conventicle, witch, nonconformist, dissenter, Presbyterian, Quaker, Phanatick, Protestant, Catholic, Popery, Jesuit, heretic, Jacobite, Christian, Bible, Mahomet, Turk, Jew, heathen, atheist. These searches were carried out through ProQuest.com

Given the scale of the project, it was necessary to be selective, so some important issues have not been given attention. Most theatre seasons included a mix of new plays, adaptations, translations, and revivals of plays both from this period and from earlier periods. The focus of this thesis is on the new plays written in English in the period, including plays that are remodelling of older plays, and plays written in the period even where there is no evidence that they were ever performed. Revivals of plays from earlier periods, and direct translations of plays in other languages, are only mentioned as context, although they were a popular part of the repertoire - plays by William Shakespeare, John Fletcher, and James Shirley are particularly prominent. Performance practice and the economics of theatre have not been explored and the composition of theatre audiences is only briefly considered. Although there was theatre activity in other places in Britain and Ireland, the thesis is predominantly focused on the London theatre scene. As religion is the central concern, some important historiographical issues have less in-depth treatment than others - for example, party politics does not feature prominently except in so far as religious disputes were matters of partisan contest, and Jacobitism is only considered in the context of the religious Non-Jurors. I have not engaged in a major way with the extensive scholarship on the literary genres of the plays, although the effect of comedy is considered.

As mentioned at the start, there is extensive scholarship on both the religion and the drama of the period. There have also been some excellent books on religion and drama in early modern England, but these have tended to focus on specific denominations, individual authors, or shorter periods of time.[21] Three edited books were published at the start of my research that engaged with religion and literature in the early modern period, but none of these books included any analysis of plays written after 1660. Their scope either ended before 1660 or, if later works were included, they were prose and verse, but not drama.[22] This thesis represents, therefore, the first exploration of all religious denominations in the new plays written over the entire period from 1660 to 1720.

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[20] Beth S. Neman, ‘John Crowne’ in *ODNB Online*, 6832; Adrian Streete, *Apocalypse and anti-Catholicism in seventeenth-century English drama* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 243.

[21] For example: Matthew Birchwood, *Staging Islam in England : drama and culture, 1640-1685* (Cambridge, 2007); Jessica Munns, *Restoration politics and drama : the plays of Thomas Otway, 1675-1683* (Newark, 1995); Bridget Orr, *Empire on the English stage : 1660-1714* (Cambridge, 2001); Susan J. Owen, *Restoration theatre and crisis* (Oxford, 1996); Streete, *Apocalypse*; John Peter West, *Dryden and enthusiasm: literature, religion, and politics in Restoration England* (Oxford, 2018).

[22] Hiscock and Wilcox (ed), *Oxford Handbook*; Jonathan Baldo and Isabel Karremann (ed), *Forms of faith: Literary form and religious conflict in early modern England* (Manchester, 2017); Jane Hwang

The rest of this Introduction will set the historical and thematic context for the thesis. It will begin with a chronological overview of the religious landscape, including a review of relevant scholarship, followed by an outline of the main themes of the thesis – toleration, hypocrisy, deception, immorality, and anticlericalism.

1.2 The changing religious landscape – a chronological overview

The historical and religious context for individual plays will be explored in detail at various points throughout the thesis. This section provides a chronological overview of the religious landscape over the whole period, together with some relevant scholarship and an indication of the plays that will be examined.

The Restoration was portrayed, both at the time and through history, as a moment of rejuvenation – the sweeping away of a period of gloom, repression, and conflict, which had become associated with Puritanism. The expectation was that a new king, a new Parliament, and a new Church would inject new energy into the political, cultural, and religious life of the nation. A new religious settlement would be needed, and many people hoped that the comparatively tolerant religious attitudes of the Republic would be maintained in a climate of religious co-existence. Charles II had promised that ‘no Man shall be disquieted or called in Question for Differences of Opinion in Matter of Religion’.[23] Religious pluralism had become the norm through the 1640s and 1650s, and schism was viewed by people from across the religious spectrum as the worst possible outcome.[24] Many argued that religious reconciliation could be achieved either through comprehension in a widely defined church or through a narrowly defined church that tolerated nonconformity outside it. But reconciliation was not the ambition of the Cavalier Parliament elected in 1661 and the restored Church of England. Their policy was to define the new Church narrowly and to enforce conformity through repressive religious legislation that had intolerance at its heart. Charles II attempted to ameliorate the effect of the legislation in 1662 through a *Declaration of Indulgence*, but this was quickly overturned by Parliament.

Degenhardt and Elizabeth Williamson (ed), *Religion and drama in early modern England : the performance of religion on the Renaissance stage* (London, 2016).

[23] King Charles II, *His declaration to all his loving subjects of the kingdome of England. Dated from his court at Breda in Holland the 4/14 of Aprill 1660 and read in Parliament, May 1. 1660* (London, 1660), p. 5.

[24] Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable hatred : tolerance and intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2009), p. 268.

One of the primary targets of the new legislation was the clergy. The 1662 *Act of Uniformity* required all ministers to take an oath to adhere to the new Prayer Book and other doctrines of the restored Church of England. Most clergy took the oath without hesitation, but a significant minority underwent struggles with their consciences before finally deciding whether or not to conform. Those who did not conform were ejected from their livings. Some of these ejected ministers disappeared into quiet retirement and others eventually conformed, but the majority of the ejected ministers decided not to give up their vocation and most of these men continued to preach or teach, even when it was unlawful. For some ejected ministers the impact of the *Act of Uniformity* was immediate, severe, and caused considerable distress. The stories of these individuals presented vivid examples of the persecution of the period, and they were used over the years to provide comfort to struggling nonconformists. Alexander Beane, for example, despite being 'one of the most celebrated preachers in the county', was ejected from his living in Stratford-upon-Avon, was shortly afterwards hounded out of town and, according to Edmund Calamy, 'endeavouring to secure himself by flight, he took a surfeit and quickly died.'[25]

The policy of narrow conformity pursued by the Cavalier parliament unleashed a climate of religious tension that would affect religion, politics, society, and culture throughout the reign of Charles II. Gary De Krey sees 'religious coercion as a defining characteristic of the Restoration.'[26] Pincus describes it as 'one of the most vicious periods of religious persecution in English history.'[27] William Bulman agrees, but argues that 'destructive religious zeal' could be seen on all sides.[28] For Neil Keeble, the conformists showed 'the intolerant extremism of an episcopalianism that would make no accommodation with its Protestant critics and preferred the coerced uniformity of formal worship to the true unity of voluntary faith.'[29] I share the view of many historians since the late 1980s that this policy of intolerance and persecution acted as a catalyst for the development of a culture of dissent in England. Donald Spaeth is explicit - 'Dissent was created by the political and religious establishment.'[30] Mark Burden, however, has argued that this attitude to the High Church position 'merely reflects the bias – whether conscious or unconscious – of most modern commentators' and writes of the

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[25] Edmund Calamy and Samuel Palmer, *The nonconformist's memorial: being an account of the ministers, who were ejected or silenced after the Restoration. vol. 2* (London, 1775), pp. 490-491.

[26] Gary De Krey, 'Between revolutions: Re-appraising the Restoration in Britain', *History Compass,* 6 (2008), pp. 738-73, p. 748.

[27] Pincus, *1688*, p. 198.

[28] William J. Bulman, 'Enlightenment and religious politics in Restoration England', *History Compass,* 10 (2012), pp. 752-64, p. 759.

[29] N. H. Keeble, 'The Nonconformist Narrative of the Bartholomeans' in N. H. Keeble (ed), *'Settling the peace of the church' : 1662 revisited* (Oxford, 2014), p. 216.

[30] Donald A. Spaeth, *The Church in an age of danger : parsons and parishioners, 1660-1740* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 6.

'dissenting misrepresentations of the Restoration religious settlement.'[31] I find Burden's argument unconvincing. The dissenters did not need to misrepresent the Restoration settlement to make their case. The legislation itself, together with the writings of many conformists, clearly demonstrated a highly aggressive attitude towards those who would not accept the authority of the restored Church of England. Keeble argues that it 'succeeded only in transforming Puritanism into dissent.'[32]

One of the tropes used by the conformists was that there was a link between the dissenters after the Restoration and the Puritans of the republican period, including the regicides. Many of the polemical plays of the period used memory as a weapon. This can be seen in two groups of plays, set just before or just after the Restoration, that attacked the Puritans, the nonconformists, and the Whigs. The first group are the satires written in the early 1660s, which will be examined in section 3.1. Although these plays broadly supported the wider cultural strategy of the restored monarchy to reject the Puritanism of the republican period, some scholars have argued that the plays are more qualified and should not be seen as homogenised.[33] The second group are the politically engaged plays written during the Popish Plot and Succession Crisis from 1678 to 1683. These plays will be explored in section 3.2.

Religion remained a divisive issue in national politics throughout Charles II's reign. Parliament continued to enact persecutory religious legislation, including the *Conventicle Acts, The Five Mile Act,* and the *Test Acts*. Charles tried again to ameliorate this legislation through another *Declaration of Indulgence* in 1672, but this was overturned by Parliament, as in 1662. Despite the persecution, nonconformity remained a small but significant presence in the religious life of the nation. The religious struggle between conformists and dissenters that followed the Restoration settlement was intertwined with constitutional debates around the balance of power between the monarchy, Parliament, and the people. There were two concerns that played on the minds of people and were used as propaganda - the dangers of 'popery and arbitrary government', and the risk of a new civil war. These tensions ebbed and flowed throughout the 1660s and 1670s and, during these years, the playwrights turned their attention to other issues and genres, and there are very few plays that engaged with religion in a material way. All this would change when the Popish Plot was revealed, and anti-Catholicism became predominant.

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[31] Mark Burden, 'John Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy* and Church of England Responses to the Ejections of 1660-2' in Keeble (ed), *'Settling the peace of the church'*, pp. 234-235.

[32] N. H. Keeble, *The literary culture of nonconformity in later seventeenth-century England* (Leicester, 1987), p. 18.

[33] David Bywaters, 'Representations of the Interregnum and Restoration in English drama of the early 1660s', *The Review of English Studies,* 60 (2009), pp. 255-70, p. 256; Rachel Willie, *Staging the Revolution : drama, reinvention and history, 1647-72* (Manchester, 2015), p. 181.

In the late summer of 1678 Titus Oates, a man who already had a highly questionable history, produced evidence that Jesuits were plotting to murder the king. His revelations got little traction until the JP to whom he had first sworn his evidence was found murdered. Although the Popish Plot was eventually revealed as a fabrication, and many people did not believe it from the start, it gained enough acceptance to electrify the political and religious atmosphere, resulting in investigations, prosecutions, and executions.

Catholicism in England survived the Reformation, although only a small minority of the population stayed true to the Catholic faith. In the late Stuart age, all religious legislation left Catholics out in the cold, although both Charles II and James II attempted, unsuccessfully, to allow a degree of toleration. The picture at a local level, however, was somewhat different. The religious legislation was not consistently enforced, leaving many Catholics free to worship privately, and there was a degree of coexistence between individual Catholics and Protestants, despite the wider strain of anti-Catholicism. John Miller and others have attributed this anomaly to a fear, not of individual English Catholics, but of a tendency towards popery perceived in the courts of Charles II and James II.[34] As Speck argues, the fear of popery was 'the most potent emotion uniting the subjects of the Stuarts'.[35] This fear was most famously articulated by Andrew Marvell in 1677 in his *Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England.* He began his account with polemical clarity - 'There has now for diverse Years, a design been carried on, to change the Lawful Government of England into an Absolute Tyranny, and to convert the established Protestant Religion into down-right Popery'.[36] This perception had intensified when it became known that the heir presumptive - the king's brother, James Duke of York - had converted to Catholicism and resigned his post as Lord High Admiral, following the 1673 *Test Act*. In the wake of the Popish Plot, bills were introduced in Parliament to exclude James from the succession.

Both anti-popery and nationalist prejudice can be seen in the growing concern that the government's foreign policy was veering towards the Catholic and absolutist monarchy of France. For almost the entire period covered by this thesis, there was just one French monarch – Louis XIV. Relations between France and England at this time were complex. Charles II had negotiated a secret treaty with Louis in 1670 that provided him with much needed finance, despite widespread antipathy to France amongst the English, and a willingness by some to go to war against France.[37] These attitudes were heightened when the secret treaty became known at the same time as the Popish Plot was being investigated. For many, like Marvell, the example of popery and arbitrary government was all too clear across the Channel. Louis was, in Marvell's eyes, 'the Master of Absolute Dominion, the Presumptive Monarch of Christendom, the declared Champion of Popery, and the hereditary, natural, inveterate enemy of our King and Nation'.[38]

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[34] John Miller, *Popery and politics in England, 1660-1688* (London, 1973), p. 1; Jeffrey R. Collins, 'Restoration Anti-Catholicism: A Prejudice in Motion' in Charles W. A. Prior and Glenn Burgess, *England's wars of religion, revisited* (Farnham, 2011), p. 286.

[35] Speck, *Reluctant revolutionaries*, p. 235.

[36] Andrew Marvell, *An account of the growth of popery, and arbitrary government in England* (Amsterdam, 1677), p. 3.

Catholic characters appear in many new plays of the period, and anti-Catholicism was a regular feature, as we will see in chapter 4. As Susan J. Owen observes, many of these plays engaged with the crisis 'in fascinating and complex ways.'[39] These attacks on Catholicism were often combined with a strain of anticlericalism. The ever-present theme of masquerade (see section 1.3) is also relevant here and the dramatists exploited disguise to the hilt. In addition to the theatrical usefulness of disguise, these plays reflected the wider belief that there were many disguised Catholics hidden in society. As Roger L'Estrange's pamphlet character Citt declared, 'your Papist in Masquerade, your Concealed Papist, these are all of em forty times worse than your Known, Jesuited, and Barefaced Papist' and the playwright Elkanah Settle included 'Popish Ingeneers under the mask of Protestants' in one of his pope-burning pageants (see section 4.1).[40] The flipside of anti-Catholicism is the glory of Protestantism, and we will see examples of the Protestant hero in some of the plays. These characters displayed resilience in their battle against Catholicism, even to the point of martyrdom.

It was around this time that the terms 'Whig' and 'Tory' were first used to describe groups who were starting to coalesce around particular political and religious views. Robert Willman dates the first uses of the terms in this political sense to February 1681.[41] Whether these groups represent the first manifestations of the modern party system has been much debated, but this is not the primary concern here.[42] Although these terms should not be seen as clear-cut and unchanging, they provide a useful shorthand. In general terms, the Whigs believed in the importance of Parliament in the polity of the nation; they were not content with the Restoration religious settlement; they were sympathetic to nonconformity; and they were strongly anti-Catholic. They were seen by their opponents, however, as quasi-republicans who were a threat to the monarchy and the Church of England, and who held beliefs that posed a serious risk of a return to civil war. The Tories believed in the primacy of the monarch and that the restored Church of England should be maintained in its current form, by legislative force if necessary. Although they were also anti-Catholic, they were seen by their opponents as quasi-Papists who were more interested in ceremonies than the word of God.

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[37] Mark Knights, *Politics and opinion in crisis, 1678-81* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 18-19.
[38] Marvell, *An account of the growth of popery, and arbitrary government in England*, p. 16.
[39] Owen, *Crisis*, p. 3.
[40] Sir Roger L'Estrange, *Citt and Bumpkin, or, A learned discourse upon swearing and lying and other laudable qualities tending to a thorow reformation : the second part* (London, 1680), p. 6; Anonymous, *The solemn mock procession of the pope, cardinalls, Jesuits, fryers &c. through the city of London, November the 17th, 1680* (London, 1680).
[41] Robert Willman, 'The origins of "Whig" and "Tory" in English political language', *The Historical Journal,* 17 (1974), pp. 247-64, pp. 259-260.
[42] For excellent summaries of the historiography on this issue, see Knights, *Politics and opinion*, pp. 348-349; De Krey, 'Between Revolutions', p. 743; Grant Tapsell, *The personal rule of Charles II, 1681-85* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 13-16.

The landscape started shifting again in 1681, and political events moved quickly. At the beginning of the year the Whigs were still in the ascendancy, prosecutions relating to the Popish Plot were continuing, the spectre of popery and arbitrary government was still prevalent, and the campaign to exclude the Duke of York from the succession continued, although none of the Exclusion bills became law. In March Charles II dissolved Parliament and it did not meet again for the remainder of his reign. This brought to an end the attempt to legislate against the Duke of York's succession. On 2nd July, the Earl of Shaftesbury, the de-facto leader of the opposition, was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower charged with treason. In August, the Scottish Parliament confirmed that James would succeed Charles, and Titus Oates lost his pension. Miller argues that, at this point, the 'last vestiges of the Plot were disposed of.'[43] The conformist counter-offensive had begun, and this manifested itself in an intensification of the persecution of dissenters. Narcissus Luttrell, writing at the time, reported that 'We are advised from severall parts that the dissenters are vigorously prosecuted on the penall lawes'.[44] Keeble reports that at this point 'the Whigs crumbled, and the nonconformists, as the most readily identifiable of their supporters, bore the brunt of the "Tory revenge" of 1681-6 - the most severe and sustained period of persecution they were called upon to endure.'[45] As the dramatist Thomas Durfey wrote, 'Tories are upmost, and the Whigs defy'd.'[46]

This shift in the political and religious landscape in 1681 was also reflected in the plays. By the end of the year the dramatists had turned their invective back onto the nonconformists. Some of the key plays at this time returned to the approach used in the early satires. Once again, we see plays set during the Republic that attack Puritans, thereby drawing the parallel between the dissenters of the 1680s and the killers of the king.[47] Between the anti-Catholic and anti-dissenter phases of drama in 1681, there is one play that got caught in the crossfire – *The Lancashire Witches* by Thomas Shadwell – and this play will be examined in depth in the case study in chapter 8, for reasons explained in section 1.1 above.

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[43] Miller, *Popery and politics*, p. 190.

[44] Narcissus Luttrell, (ed), *A brief historical relation of state affairs from September 1678 to April 1714* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 148.

[45] Keeble, *The literary culture of nonconformity*, p. 61.

[46] Thomas Durfey, *The royalist* (London, 1682), 'The prologue'.

[47] Hughes, *English drama*, p. 231; Owen, *Crisis*, p. 4-5.

Charles II died in February 1685 and a smooth succession brought James II to the throne. Later that year the Duke of Monmouth, Charles II's illegitimate son, launched a rebellion against the king, but was defeated and executed. In France, Louis XIV revoked the *Edict of Nantes*, leading to a flow of Huguenot refugees into England. James began a programme of change that enabled Catholics to play a greater role in public life, including *Declarations of Indulgence* in Scotland and England. The reign of James II was not a prolific period for new plays. Only nineteen were performed or published between the reopening of the theatres in April 1685 (following the death of Charles II) and the summer of 1688. This compares with an average of twelve new plays per year between 1660 and 1720. This comparative famine, which had started in 1683, lasted through the political turbulence of the 1688/89 season, during which only two new plays were performed. Aphra Behn described this as 'the Dearth and Famine on the Stage.'[48] This dearth puzzled the playwright Charles Sedley: 'Is it not strange to see in such an Age / The Pulpit get the better of the Stage? / Not through Rebellion as in former days, / But Zeal for Sermons and neglect for Plays.'[49] After the accession of James II there is no evidence of revivals of the anti-Catholic plays of the previous reign, although some were reprinted so it is possible that there may have been performances. Streete argues that there is little anti-Catholicism in the plays of James's reign, which is 'characterised by a sober, devout kind of Roman Catholicism.'[50] There were three plays during the reign that continued the attack on nonconformists – see section 3.3.

In 1688 James issued an order-in-council that his second English *Declaration of Indulgence* should be read aloud in all churches. Seven bishops, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, asked to be excluded from this requirement and they were indicted on a charge of seditious libel, but were acquitted. In June the queen gave birth to a male heir, thereby raising the possibility of an enduring Catholic dynasty. William of Orange, married to James's eldest child Mary, was invited by opposition politicians to intervene. He landed at Torbay in November and moved towards London. In what became known as the Glorious Revolution, James fled to France and William summoned a Convention parliament. The Convention eventually decided in February 1689 to offer joint sovereignty to William and Mary, which was accepted. James landed in Ireland in March. In May, Parliament passed *An Act for Exempting their Majestyes Protestant Subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the Penalties of certaine Lawes*, more commonly known as the Toleration Act. As its title suggests, this did not repeal the restrictive religious laws, but exempted dissenters from prosecution. William led an army to Ireland in the summer of 1690 and defeated James at the Battle of the Boyne. James fled back to France.

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[48] Aphra Behn, *The luckey chance* (London, 1687), 'Prologue'.

[49] Charles Sedley, *Bellamira* (London, 1687), 'Prologue'.

[50] Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 240.

The new play famine ended in the autumn of 1689. From then until the end of 1690 there was a feast of new work. There were three significant premieres in November and December 1689 - *Dido and Aeneas* by Nahum Tate with music by Henry Purcell, Aphra Behn's last play *The Widow Ranter* (performed posthumously a few months after her death), and John Dryden's *Don Sebastian* (to be considered in chapter 6). These were followed by sixteen new plays in 1690. The themes of hypocrisy and anticlericalism continued after the Revolution, but there was another shift in the religious adherence of the characters being targeted. Streete warns against seeing the 'literary culture in the early years of William and Mary's reign as necessarily reflecting a pro-Whig, anti-Catholic triumphalism', but there are some plays that turn their attention back towards the Catholics.[51] There were also revivals of some of the anti-Catholic plays of the Popish Plot period (to be analysed in section 4.1) including Dryden's *The Spanish Fryar*, which was revived in May 1689 after having been prohibited during James's reign. Mary II attended a performance, which caused something of a stir.[52] She also attended a revival of *The Massacre of Paris* (1679) in November 1689, and that year saw three reprints of *The Female Prelate* (1680).[53] All these plays will be examined in section 4.1.

Throughout the reigns of Charles II and James II, religious conflict was primarily focused on the power struggle between the restored Church of England and those groups and individuals who were excluded from it, primarily the nonconformists and the Catholics. The conformists had been broadly united since the Restoration, but this would change after the Glorious Revolution. The political and religious trauma of the regime change from James II to William and Mary would transform the position of the three broad religious groups. The hopes of Catholics had been raised by the policies of James II, but his ejection left them back in the wilderness where they had been for generations. Nonconformists had hoped for either comprehension and/or the repeal of the persecutory religious legislation that had followed the Restoration. They were granted a compromise – no comprehension and no repeal of the legislation, but a legal concession not to punish those who, with some exceptions, chose to worship God in their own way. Even the Church of England underwent change, with its internal divisions heightened to the point of schism. After the accession of William and Mary, all ministers of the Church of England were required to swear an oath of allegiance confirming their acceptance of the legitimacy of the new monarchs. For about four hundred clergy, including the Archbishop of Canterbury and some other bishops, this oath was unacceptable. They believed they were still bound by the oath they made to James II who was, in their view, still their rightful monarch. They refused to take the oath and lost their positions. They became known as the Non-Jurors.

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[51] Ibid., p. 241.

[52] William Van Lennep and Emmett L Avery (ed), *The London stage, 1660-1800, Vols 1 and 2* (Carbondale, 1960-1968), p. 371.

[53] Raymond D. Tumbleson, *Catholicism in the English Protestant imagination : nationalism, religion, and literature, 1660-1745* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 150-1.

As with the ejected ministers of 1662, the Non-Jurors' rupture from the church was provoked by the requirement to swear an oath. But in 1662 the required oath was on specifically religious issues, whereas the Non-Jurors were required to swear allegiance to a political leader. Although the initial reason for their dissent may have been as much political as religious, many religious factors lay behind their actions. They were religious not lay figures, they lost their clerical livings, and the primary reason they gave for refusing the oath was that they had sworn before God their allegiance to James II, which their consciences would not allow them to forswear. The result of their actions was also highly religious as they effectively created a new church with the power to appoint its own bishops, one of which was the leading antitheatrical writer Jeremy Collier, who will feature prominently in this thesis (in particular, in sections 2.1, 2.3, and 5.2). The playwright Colley Cibber saw the Non-Jurors as 'a Faction, which is the first of its Kind that ever made a Schism in the Church of England'.[54] Mark Goldie argues that this was the 'only schism in the history of the Anglican hierarchy'.[55] Many religious groups argued that schism was to be avoided at all costs provided, of course, that such avoidance was to be achieved by everyone else accepting their point of view. Accusing another group of being schismatic had long been a polemical weapon and the Church of England saw the Non-Jurors as schismatic. The Non-Jurors, by contrast, considered that they were the true Church and that the Church of England was schismatic.[56] Despite the schism, there were many religious and political views that were shared between the Non-Jurors and some conformists.

The Non-Jurors have often been seen by scholars as a political movement more than a religious sect and have sometimes been seen as a subset of the Jacobites.[57] When viewed through the lens of the plays of the period, the Non-Jurors are presented as both political rebels and religious dissenters. In section 5.2 we will see how the dramatists launched vigorous attacks on the Non-Jurors, revealing a strong seam of anticlericalism. Once again, we are presented with religious figures who are hypocrites or excessively zealous – or both. They are also shown as a threat to both church and state. The dramatists positioned them in a similar space and sharing similar characteristics as the Puritans, the nonconformists, and the Catholics of earlier plays.

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[54] Colley Cibber, *The comedy call'd The non-juror. Shewing the particular scenes wherein that hypocrite is concern'd. With remarks, and a key, explaining the characters of that excellent play* (London, 1718), p. 13.

[55] Mark Goldie, 'The Nonjurors, Episcopacy, and the Origins of the Convocation Controversy' in Eveline Cruickshanks (ed), *Ideology and conspiracy : aspects of Jacobitism, 1689-1759* (Edinburgh, 1982), p. 20.

[56] Andrew Starkie, *The Church of England and the Bangorian Controversy, 1716-1721* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 74.

[57] In the index to Tim Harris's *Revolution*, the entry for Non-Jurors reads 'see Jacobites'. Tim Harris, *Revolution : the great crisis of the British monarchy, 1685-1720* (London ; New York, 2006), p. 616.

The departure of the Non-Jurors did not leave the rest of the Church of England in a condition of contented unity. There was increasing division between conformists on issues relating to toleration and the relationship between the church and the state. Labels such as High Churchmen and Latitudinarians became common – High Churchmen believed in the importance of ritual and took strong positions on issues of doctrine, whereas the Latitudinarians adopted more flexible positions on such issues. One issue of dispute between these groups was occasional conformity. The *Corporation Act* of 1661 required all public office holders to take a series of oaths of allegiance and to take 'the Sacrament of the Lords Supper according to the Rites of the Church of England' at least once a year.[58] The objective of these regulations, which were developed and tightened in the subsequent *Test Ac*ts of 1672 and 1678, was to ensure that only members of the Church of England could hold public office. Nonconformists had found a way of working around this legislation by taking communion in an established church occasionally – sometimes only once a year. This practice became a controversial political issue soon after the accession of Queen Anne in 1702 and dissenters were condemned as 'Crafty, Faithless, and Insidious Persons, who can Creep to Our Altars'.[59] Between 1702 and 1704 there were three attempts to create legislation against occasional conformity, but without success. After the defeat of the three bills, the occasional conformity controversy was relatively calm for a few years but then erupted again towards the end of 1709, fuelled by the preaching of Dr Henry Sacheverell and his subsequent impeachment by the House of Commons (see section 2.1). In a sermon at St Pauls in November 1709, Sacheverell attacked occasional conformists, whom he accused of being schismatics and hypocrites and acting under the pretence of moderation. He linked 'Moderation and Occasional Conformity' as the weapons of 'Secret Treachery' that would destroy the Church. He urged occasional conformists to 'throw off the Mask, entirely quit Our Church, of which they are no true Members, and not fraudulently eat her Bread, and lay wait for her Ruin'.[60] The Tories won a landslide victory in the November 1710 election and occasional conformity was prohibited by the *Act for preserving the Protestant Religion,* which finally became law in December 1711. One further attempt at restrictive legislation became law in 1714 - the *Schism*

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[58] *An Act for the well governing and regulating of corporations* (1661).

[59] Henry Sacheverell, *The political union. A discourse shewing the dependance of government on religion in general: and of the English monarchy on the Church of England in particular* (Oxford, 1702), p. 61.

[60] Henry Sacheverell, *The perils of false brethren, both in church, and state* (London, 1709), pp. 17, 22.

Act that aimed at repressing dissenting academies. Neither Act was enforced, and both were repealed in 1719, following the Hanoverian succession and the return of the Whigs to power.

The reign of Queen Anne had brought some comfort to the High Church conformists as the queen was herself sympathetic to them and the Tories. She was also, of course, a direct descendant of James II, unlike William III, who had reigned alone for eight years after Mary II died. The peaceful transfer of the crown to the dynastically and geographically distant Hanoverians in 1714, and the requirement to swear new oaths of allegiance, were a significant blow to the Jacobites and the Non-Jurors who had hoped for a Stuart restoration. Within a year of the Hanoverian succession, riots broke out in many parts of the country, and a rebellion was launched in Scotland in September 1715. Whether these events were a direct reaction to the Hanoverian succession or, as Tim Harris has argued, more a reaction to the Whig supremacy that came with it, the result was a period of political disorder.[61] During this period, Jacobite resistance kindled fears of a Catholic revival and, once again, the dramatists engaged with anti-Catholicism (see section 4.3).

In 1717 Benjamin Hoadly, the latitudinarian Bishop of Bangor, preached a sermon before George I that argued for the Erastian position that Christ laid down no absolute form of church government that could exclude dissenters or would seek to exercise any control over matters relating to individual conscience.[62] This provoked a pamphlet storm which became known as the Bangorian Controversy and would continue for the rest of the year and beyond.[63] His sermon also provoked the lower house of Convocation to call for a report on Hoadly. To protect him, the Whig government prorogued Convocation the same day, bringing to an end a very long-standing controversy over the place of Convocation in the life of the state.[64] The Bangorian Controversy is the subject of one play that will be examined in section 5.3.

1.3 Themes

In Behn's comedy *The Roundheads* (1681), Lady Desborough threatens to expose the Puritan elder Ananias Gogle for his hypocritical behaviour and to 'set you out in your Colours', which are:

> your impudent and Bloody Principles, your cheats, your Rogueries on honest men, through their kind, deluded Wives, whom you cant and goggle into a Belief, 'tis a great work of Grace to steal, and beggar their whole Families, to

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[61] Tim Harris, *Politics under the later Stuarts : party conflict in a divided society, 1660-1715* (London, 1993), pp. 219-220.

[62] William Gibson, *The Church of England, 1688-1832 : unity and accord* (London, 2001), pp. 84-5.

[63] Mark Goldie reports 74 pamphlets in the month of July 1717 alone. Goldie 'The Nonjurors, Episcopacy, and the Origins of the Convocation Controversy', p. 17.

[64] Starkie, *Bangorian Controversy*, p. 78.

> contribute to your Gormandizing, Lust, and Laziness; Ye Locusts of the Land, preach Nonsence, Blasphemy, and Treason …… the heap of Vice, Hypocrisie, and Devils that possess all your Party.[65]

This passage brings together the main underlying themes of this thesis – hypocrisy, deception, immorality, anticlericalism, and intolerance. The plays show us a continuous line of flawed religious figures from the Puritans in the plays of the early Restoration, through the Catholics and nonconformists in the plays that followed the Popish Plot, to the Non-Jurors of the later plays. Even the conformists did not escape the dramatists' lash (see chapter 5).

Streete emphasises the antagonistic and polemical nature of religious discourse in early modern England, or what he describes as 'the polemical tang of this period.'[66] The dramatists adopted this 'tang' and often endowed the religious characters in their plays with Lady Desborough's 'colours' to reinforce their polemical attacks on religious groups. Peter Lake has argued that anti-popery and anti-puritanism were polemically ambiguous and 'could be bent to a range of often widely divergent political and polemical ends.'[67] Such ambiguity could also be applied to these 'colours', presenting opportunities to the dramatists to attack different targets at different times in different ways.

This use of polemical ambiguity can be seen through the lens of adaptations of one play - Moliere's *Tartuffe*, first performed at Versailles in 1664. Versions of Moliere appeared throughout the period - for example Behn's *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), which will be explored in section 3.2, was an adaptation of *Le Malade Imaginaire*. *Tartuffe*, however, was a particularly useful model for those playwrights who wished to denigrate religious figures. Scholars have identified a range of plays that are obvious versions of *Tartuffe* or have been influenced by it.[68] Rosamund Runte includes a table of over twenty plays in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which have been 'usually cited as bearing some resemblance' to *Tartuffe*.[69] The relevance of these versions relates to the shifting religious denomination of the title character.

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[65] Aphra Behn, *The Roundheads* (London, 1682), p. 30.

[66] Adrian Streete, *Protestantism and drama in early modern England* (Cambridge, UK ; New York, 2009), p. 9.

[67] Peter Lake, 'Anti-popery: the structure of prejudice' in Richard Cust and Ann Hughes (ed), *Conflict in early Stuart England : studies in religion and politics, 1603-1642* (London, 1989), p. 79; Peter Lake, 'Anti-Puritanism: The Structure of a Prejudice' in Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (ed), *Religious politics in post-reformation England : essays in honour of Nicholas Tyacke* (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 94-95.

[68] Roseann Runte, 'Cross-cultural influences: Versions of "Tartuffe" in eighteenth-century France and Restoration England', *Romance Notes,* 36 (1996), pp. 265-76; Noel Peacock, 'Moliere nationalised: Tartuffe on the British stage from the Restoration to the present day' in David Bradby and Andrew Calder, *The Cambridge companion to Moliere* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 177-188; Elaine M. McGirr, *Heroic mode and political crisis, 1660-1745* (Newark, 2009).

[69] Runte, 'Cross-cultural influences', p. 275.

The earliest English translation of the play is Thomas Shadwell's *The Hypocrite* (1669), but this is lost to us, sadly.[70] The first version to share Moliere's title appeared in 1670, and its author, Matthew Medbourne, gave it a subtitle of '*or the French Puritan*'.[71] As the subtitle suggests, Medbourne portrays his Tartuffe in the tradition of the hypocritical Puritans of the early Restoration satires (see section 3.1). When the playwrights turned their fire on the Catholics in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, Crowne wrote a version of Moliere's play called *The English Friar* (1690) (see section 4.2). The target changes again in *The Non-Juror* (1717) by Colley Cibber, when Tartuffe becomes a Non-Juror (see section 5.2).

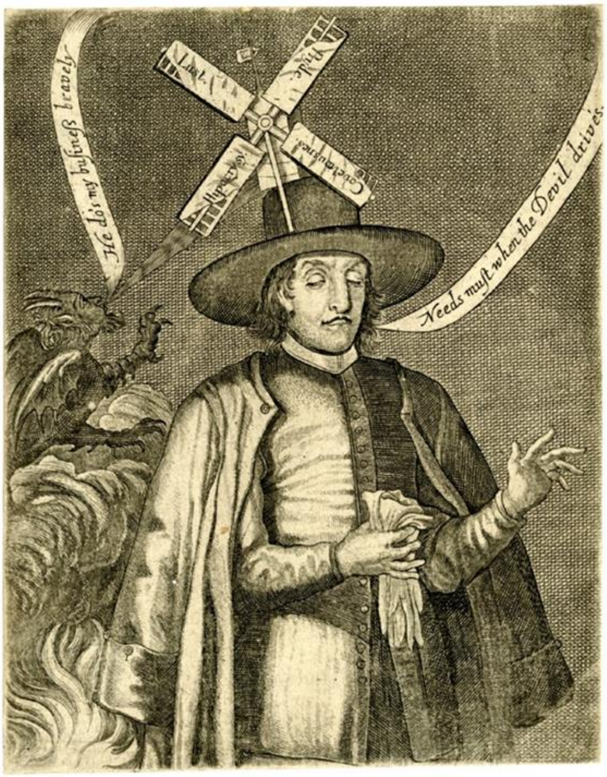
He do's my buſineſs bravely
Lust.
Pride
Hypocrisy
Covetousness
Needs muſt when the Devil drives.

Figure 1-1: *Satirical portrait of Adoniram Byfield or Thomas Wynne, with the Devil*, 1679?. Attributed to Richard Gaywood, BM 1864,1210.426.[72]

This trope of defining religious opponents as flawed human beings reflected the wider world of public discourse. Figure 1-1 shows a drawing of a nonconformist doing the devil's 'business' and indulging in pride, covetousness, hypocrisy, and lust. The use of a windmill could imply that his principles are blowing in the wind, reflecting the trope of nonconformists having no fixed principles. The captions indicate that the devil is controlling those who do not conform to the Church of England. As with this drawing, many of the religious attacks in the plays are focused on clerical characters, reflecting the strain of anticlericalism in the wider world. These clerics are often seen as indulging in deception, dissimulation, and disguise – behaviours that are often seen at the root of hypocrisy. These themes, and the interrelationship between them, will feature throughout this thesis. This section will explore the context for the themes, starting with intolerance and toleration. Hypocrisy, disguise, and deception are so intertwined that they will be considered together. This will be followed by the themes of immorality and anticlericalism.

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[70] Ibid., p. 266.

[71] Peacock, 'Moliere Nationalised', pp. 177-178.

[72] There is a debate about the identity of this character and, therefore, whether he is a Puritan or a Quaker. The date is also unclear. BM 1864,1210.426.

Toleration and intolerance

As mentioned above, there were many attempts to enforce universal conformity to the Church of England, backed up with a raft of religious legislation that made it impossible for nonconformists to gather, preach, or hold public office. The long English Reformation, however, had released religious plurality into the nation and this would prove to be irreversible. The diversity of religious groups had intensified during the 1640s and 1650s, so the religious landscape at the start of the Restoration was a complex one. This led to decades of conflict and debates about religious issues such as unity, conformity, dissent, comprehension, persecution, schism, and toleration. We will see these issues reflected in the plays.

One important reason that religious dissent was not tolerated after the Restoration was that it was seen by many as the flip-side of political radicalism, reinforced by the experience of the decades before the Restoration. In the early satires (see section 3.1), it is the political affiliation of the central characters that is under attack, as much as their religious convictions. This perceived combination was assessed by Tapsell as 'immensely powerful' in the later Stuart era.[73] Knights makes an important distinction when he argues that the persecutory legislation 'reveals a concern not so much with doctrinal uniformity as political quiescence.'[74] But to what extent was this link between religious dissent and political sedition a reality or a perception? Richard Greaves argues that 'Defiance of the law in the nonconformist community was both pervasive and persistent' and that 'the traditional picture of quiescent Restoration dissent is no longer tenable.'[75] Harris reports that 'Most scholars are more skeptical than Greaves about the strength of organized radical opposition to the restored monarchy.'[76] I believe that we should not consider dissenters as a homogeneous group, either religiously or politically. From a religious perspective, the different dissenting groups held a wide range of religious views. For example, the Presbyterians hoped for comprehension within the restored Church of England, while the Quakers were seen by some as a short step away from atheists.[77] Politically, some, no doubt, were radical by anyone's definition; some were quietist; many were probably apolitical; and there were some who were engaged in politics in a more formal way.[78] For the conformists, however, the perception of political danger arising from the toleration of dissent was inescapable.

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[73] Grant Tapsell, 'Religion and the Government of the Later Stuarts', p. 106.

[74] Mark Knights, '"Meer religion"', p. 45.

[75] Richard L. Greaves, *Enemies under his feet : radicals and nonconformists in Britain, 1664-1677* (Stanford, Calif., 1990), pp. 1, 249.

One other concern about toleration was, as Andrew Murphy has observed, that it could serve as 'a cover for reintroducing Catholicism into England.'[79] This antagonism towards toleration was, therefore, rooted in concerns about both political radicalism and Catholic infiltration. In the minds of many people in this period, these concerns were linked, and religious intolerance continued, both in the plays and the wider world. As Knights has observed, toleration was 'deemed incompatible with the maintenance of a stable society'.[80] This attitude would remain prevalent throughout Charles II's reign, although the debate about toleration and persecution would continue to ebb and flow.

One weapon used by the enemies of dissent was the medicalisation of religious deviance and enthusiasm. This was a common and long-established trope that used metaphors of disease to describe those who would not conform.[81] In 1651, Henry More wrote:

> it is too too common a disease now adayes to be driven by heedlesse intoxicating imaginations under pretense of higher strains of Religion and supernaturall light, and by bidding adieu to sober reason and a purified mind, to grow first fanaticall; and then Atheisticall and sensuall.[82]

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[76] Tim Harris, 'What's new about the Restoration? ', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies,* 29 (1997), pp. 187-222, p. 197.

[77] Joseph Glanvill, *A blow at modern Sadducism in some philosophical considerations about witchcraft* (London, 1668), p. 158.

[78] This point will be underlined by a series of brief footnotes that will be added as the different groups are referenced in the plays.

[79] Andrew Murphy, R., *Conscience and community. Revisiting toleration and religious dissent in early modern England and America* (Pennsylvania, 2001), p. 129.

[80] Knights, *Politics and opinion*, p. 366.

[81] Alexandra Walsham, 'In Sickness and in health' in C. Scott Dixon, Dagmar Freist and Mark Greengrass, *Living with religious diversity in early modern Europe* (Farnham, 2009), p. 163; Michael Heyd, *Be sober and reasonable : the critique of enthusiasm in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries* (Leiden, 1995), p. 6.

[82] Henry More, *The second lash of Alazonomastix* (Cambridge, 1651), p. 11.

In 1688 Henry Wharton described hypochondria as one of the pathological effects of enthusiasm and, in the anonymous pamphlet *The Presbyterians Unmask'd* (1676), the author refers to the 'gangrene of sects' and 'venomous contagion'.[83] The metaphor of gangrene to describe religious radicals was famously adopted by Thomas Edwards in 1646 in his intolerant polemic *Gangraena*.[84] We will see examples of the ways in which this medicalisation of dissent was used by the dramatists.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688, with its subsequent *Toleration Act* of 1689, has been seen as a watershed in the development of religious toleration in England. But this new policy did not arrive fully-formed with the accession of William and Mary - there was also a significant shift in attitudes during the reign of James II. Toleration may have been enshrined in legislation in 1689, but this was not extended to Catholics and some dissenters, and it left the penal laws in place, even if they were not enforced. The *Declarations of Indulgence* issued by James in 1687 and 1688, however, offered a suspension of the penal laws and toleration of all denominations including Catholics. It is widely accepted by historians that the degree of toleration offered by James II was of a comparatively more generous kind than what emerged in the following reign. Harris describes James II as the 'most religiously tolerant monarch since the Reformation.' William Gibson sees the 1689 *Toleration Act* as replacing 'James's broad religious indulgence with a narrower Protestant Trinitarian indulgence.' De Krey sees the 1689 *Toleration Act* as less generous than 'the indulgence with full civil rights that James had offered'. Scott Sowerby argues that the long-term effect of James's tolerationist policies was profound.[85] Pincus, however, argues that the Glorious Revolution was a huge turning point in British history and was a true revolution and not, as Sowerby argues, a conservative counter-revolution provoked by a desire to complete a 360 degree 'revolution' back to the status quo that existed before the 'real' revolution of James's reign. Pincus does accept, however, that James II was a moderniser, and that the Revolution was a battle between two sets of modernisers rather than one of conservatives against revolutionaries.[86] I accept the idea that both James and William were modernisers, but I see the toleration policies of James as being more revolutionary than those of William.

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[83] Henry Wharton, *The enthusiasm of the Church of Rome* (London, 1688), p. 11; S. T., *The Presbyterians unmask'd* (London, 1676), p. 176.

[84] Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the struggle for the English revolution* (Oxford, 2004), p. v.

[85] Harris, *Revolution*, p. 182; Gibson, *The Church of England*, p. 62; Gary De Krey, *Restoration and revolution in Britain : a political history of the era of Charles II and the Glorious Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2007), p. 265; Scott Sowerby, *Making toleration the repealers and the Glorious Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013), p. 10.

[86] Pincus, *1688*, pp. 1-10; Scott Sowerby, 'Of different complexions: Religious diversity and national identity in James II's toleration campaign', *The English Historical Review,* CXXIV (2009), pp. 29-52, p. 49.

One of the reasons that a policy of toleration was able to gain traction in this period was that there was an increasing acceptance that persecution should no longer be used in the religious sphere. This view was even shared by many within the Church of England who, according to De Krey, ‘began to distinguish between moderate dissenters, who might be tolerated or accommodated, and extreme dissenters, whose defiance of political authority required a harsher response.’[87] Knights argues that sedition came to be seen ‘not as subversion of the church but as undermining the state. Sedition was thus secularised’.[88] Miller identifies different attitudes within the Church of England – ‘To High Churchmen, Dissenters were guilty of rebellion and regicide, as still wished to overthrow the monarchy ... Low Churchmen responded that the High Church persecuted harmless sober people because they would not submit to their authority’.[89] As we will see in chapter 6, Settle’s *Distress’d Innocence* (1690) condemns religious persecution by taking to extremes what can happen when it is turned against a minority. Alongside the reduction in persecution, the period also saw an increase in co-existence between the different Christian denominations. We will see glimpses of this co-existence in some of the plays of 1690, examined in section 4.2. In John Dennis’s *Gibraltar* (1705), one character says ‘As long as there is Liberty of Conscience Abroad, why should not every Man be damn'd in his own way? I trouble my Head with no Man's Religion---Not I---why ---should any meddle with mine?’[90] Religious intolerance did not disappear after 1689 and the plays confirm this. But the plays also reflect the increasing level of toleration as the period progresses, including some sympathetically drawn Quakers.

‘A Masquerading Age’

The restoration of the monarchy and the Church of England in 1660 led to decades of religious turmoil as the various denominations grappled with the new religious settlement. In this climate of religious conflict and uncertainty, groups and individuals searched for weapons of polemical attack and one prominent feature was the use of accusations of hypocrisy. Most religious groups were accused by their opponents of being false Christians; papists were assumed to be hiding everywhere in masquerade; nonconformists were seen as dissemblers seeking to avoid penal laws through occasional conformity; and many conformists were seen as papists in disguise. In 1673 the playwright William Wycherley described the period as 'a masquerading age'.[91]

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[87] De Krey, *Restoration and revolution*, p. 86.

[88] Knights, ‘”Meer religion”’, p. 69.

[89] John Miller, *Cities divided : politics and religion in English provincial towns, 1660-1722* (Oxford, 2007), p. 138.

[90] John Dennis, *Gibraltar* (London, 1705), p. 39.

Modern scholars of politics and history see hypocrisy, dissimulation, and disguise as inescapable features of public life, both in the twenty-first century and in the late Stuart age. As John Spurr wrote of the 1670s, 'At times almost everyone seems to have been dissembling.' This included Charles II who, as Ronald Hutton has argued, was a monarch who loved masks, whether of ceremony, or role-playing, or of intrigue.[92] Knights has observed that hypocrisy often involves 'an inner (often sinister) self that was being disguised, one that could be revealed, unmasked, and exposed.'[93] Disguise and the mask are key features of hypocrisy, and they are also, of course, theatrical concepts. At a fundamental level, all actors disguise themselves in their characters, but many plays take this a step further when characters adopt disguises, usually with the intention of deceiving others. Drama, therefore, offers an excellent medium for engaging with the theme of hypocrisy. After all, the etymology of the word hypocrite includes the Greek word *ὑποκριτής* - an actor on the stage.[94] In the anonymous *The Folly of Priestcraft* (1690), Leucasia draws the parallel between hypocrisy and acting:

> Of all the Men by God and Nature curs'd,
> Surely the fawning Hypocrite is worst.
> To his compar'd, the Player's Life is ease;
> He always Acts—They only when they please.'[95]

The concept of the hypocrite as actor offers theatre audiences a multi-layered way of exploring how performance and disguise can conceal or reveal. It can also show the mask that hides nothing but a vacuum. Hutton looked behind the masks of Charles II and concluded that - 'Behind those coverings, something was always missing.'[96]

The hypocritical Puritan was quickly adopted as a satirical stereotype in Restoration comedy, with the first portrayals being of Puritans of the republican period. These plays did not, however, invent this trope. The plays of the early seventeenth-century offer many famous examples of the hypocritical Puritan including Malvolio in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1601), Tribulation in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (1610), Zeal-of-the-Land Busy 'a notable hypocritical Vermine' in Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), and Stupido 'that plodding puritane, That artless ass, and that earth-creeping dolt' in the anonymous *The Pilgrimage to Parnassus* (1597-1601).[97] Lucia Nigri has explored such characters in plays from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century and she concludes that their complexity and dynamism make them more than just good entertainment. She argues that the religious anxiety about 'devotional life and practices in England' and, in particular, 'the often ambiguous and deceitful behaviour displayed by some clergymen of the time' added a deeper level of cultural power to the portrayals of the hypocrite on the stage.[98] This thesis will show that her analysis also applies to plays written after the Restoration, where we will see a variety of manifestations of hypocrisy across all religious denominations, some of which provide dynamism within the plots of the plays. The issue of the importance of dynamism in drama will be explored in section 2.2.

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[91] William Wycherley, *The gentleman dancing-master* (London, 1673), p. 10. John Spurr adopted the phrase as the title of a book in which he draws parallels between politicians and actors. John Spurr, *England in the 1670s : this masquerading age* (Oxford, 2000), p. 2.

[92] David Runciman, *Political hypocrisy* (Princeton, 2018), p. 1; Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, p. 2; Lucia Nigri and Naya Tsentourou, *Forms of hypocrisy in early modern England* (New York, 2017), p. 4; Mark Knights, *The devil in disguise : deception, delusion, and fanaticism in the early English Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2011); Ronald Hutton, *Charles the second : King of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (Oxford, 1989), p. 458.

[93] Knights, *The devil in disguise*, p. 7.

[94] *OED* (Oxford, 2019), www.oed.com, 'hypocrite, n.'.

[95] Anonymous, *The converts, or, The folly of priest-craft* (London, 1690), p. 9.

[96] Hutton, *Charles the second*, p. 458.

Dramatists often created metaphorical contexts for religious dissimulation by fashioning a world of masquerade in their plays. For example, Thomas Otway's *The Atheist* (1683) is full of disguises and masks and hidden identities. Characters enter at various times 'masqu'd', disguis'd', 'Vizarded', 'in Man's Cloaths' and one disguise is shared by two characters. There are so many that, at one point, the central character Beaugard bewails the preponderance of masks - 'Mask'd too; when the Devil shall I see a Woman with her own natural Face again?'[99] Otway's play (which will be explored in detail in chapter 7) also reflects the link between dissimulation and atheism. Daniel Scargill, in his 1669 recantation of his previous atheism, referred to 'the openly professed Atheism of some, and the secret Atheism of others'.[100] Scholars have debated whether there were early modern atheists who concealed their lack of belief, or whether atheists simply didn't exist. David Wootton summarises Lucien Febvre's conclusion that 'the dominant culture of the sixteenth century was inescapably religious' and that 'even though contemporaries accused each other of being atheists, they were all in fact believers.' Wootton disputes Febvre's argument and says that there were atheists in this period, but they concealed 'their unbelief under a cloak of hypocrisy and deceit.'[101] Roger Lund reports that orthodox critics of the time saw atheists 'like shape-shifters who systematically exploit disguise.'[102] This idea that atheism and dissimulation are strongly linked also plays into other tropes of the period – that nonconformists are papists and/or atheists in disguise, and that Catholicism is not a true religion. As Philip Connell argues, 'For loyalist writers …. the "Masquerade Religion" of the dissenters was not merely a screen for Jesuitical conspiracy; it could also be regarded as a form of atheistic imposture.'[103]

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[97] Ben Jonson, *Bartholmew fayre* (London, 1640), p. 6; Anonymous, *The pilgrimage to Parnassus* (London, 1949), p. 117.

[98] Lucia Nigri, 'Religious Hypocrisy in Performance: Roman Catholicism and The London Stage' in Nigri and Tsentourou, *Forms of hypocrisy in early modern England*, p. 70.

[99] Thomas Otway, *The atheist* (London, 1684), p. 48.

[100] Daniel Scargill, *The recantation of Daniel Scargill* (London, 1669), p. 6.

[101] David Wootton, 'Unbelief in early modern Europe', *History Workshop,* 20 (1985), pp. 82-100, pp. 83, 88.

Hypocrisy is also important in the consideration of another theme - the swearing of oaths which is, by its nature, a public declaration using words. The activity has an element of theatricality to it, whatever the context, and so drama lends itself well to the consideration of the issue of oaths. Throughout this thesis, we will encounter oaths of allegiance, lover's oaths, and giving false witness under oath. Oaths are often used in the plays to expose the hypocrisy of religious opponents and, occasionally, to demonstrate the virtue of those who kept their oaths. Oaths were seen by some as 'necessary for the execution of the magistrate's office and the preservation of humane society'.[104] Oaths had become political tools that were used, with varying degrees of ruthlessness, by the different regimes of early modern England to exclude those who the regimes saw as dangerous or unwelcome.[105] Many of these oaths led to struggles of conscience. This was often a struggle with oaths of loyalty and allegiance, and particularly with those oaths that required the abjuration of an earlier oath, as in the case of the Non-Jurors. This issue will be explored in detail in section 3.1.

As we will see, religious conversions take place in some of the plays. In a few cases these conversions are genuine, but most are dissimulated, often to further romantic ambitions. In three cases the protagonist complains that the process of conversion is too much like hard work. The portrayals of dissembling conversion in the plays would have raised questions about the integrity of anyone declaring religious conversion. This could include an implied criticism of the most famous convertee of the period - James, Duke of York.

Immorality

The period was not only seen as a masquerading age but also as 'this immoral Age' when libertines and rakes could thrive. Even after the movement for the reformation of manners, one character in a play was surprised to find ‘so honest a Man in this immoral Age.’[106] For the first half of the period the monarch himself was a man well known for his enjoyment of the high life and for his countless illegitimate children. But many people saw such behaviour - including licentiousness, gluttony, drunkenness, and avarice – as immoral and a threat to the spiritual life of the nation. Concerns about the moral climate, which had been circulating for some time, acquired a degree of organisational structure after the Glorious Revolution through the establishment of the Societies for the Reformation of Manners. Josiah Woodward, in his *Account of the Societies for Reformation of Manners*, bewailed the perceived moral degradation of the times and the revival of ‘Prophane Swearing and Cursing, Drunkenness, Open-Lewdness, and Prophanation of the Lord's-Day’.[107] William III himself had expressed concerns about ‘the open and avowed Practice of Vice, Immorality and Prophaneness, which amongst many Men has too much prevailed in this Our Kingdom of late Years’.[108] One motivation for this criticism was the fear that moral degradation was a sign of religious error. Faramerz Dabhoiwala has drawn attention to the connection between sexual and religious deviance in the period. He sees ‘a close intellectual association between sexual and spiritual discipline’ and reports that the punishments for both were similar.[109]

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[102] Roger D. Lund, *Ridicule, religion and the politics of wit in Augustan England* (Farnham, 2012), p. 106.

[103] Philip Connell, *Secular chains : poetry and the politics of religion from Milton to Pope* (Oxford, 2016), p. 107.

[104] Daniel Featley, *The dippers dipt, or, The anabaptists duck'd and plung'd over head and eares, at a disputation in Southwark* (London, 1645), p. 167.

[105] John Spurr, 'Perjury, profanity and politics', *The Seventeenth Century,* 8 (1993), pp. 29-50, p. 35; Conal Condren, *Argument and authority in early modern England : the presupposition of oaths and offices* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 241; Edward Vallance, *Revolutionary England and the national covenant : state oaths, Protestantism, and the political nation, 1553-1682* (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK ; Rochester, NY, 2005), p. 193.

Woodward, Collier, and others saw the theatres as prominent contributors to moral degradation, as there was a lot of behaviour in the plays that alarmed them. Woodward saw the theatres as ‘our Scandalous Play-Houses’.[110] The potentially immoral nature of the theatre space will be explored in chapter 2. Collier opened *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage* with a sentence that places the blame clearly on the stage - ‘Being convinc'd that nothing has gone farther in Debauching the Age than the Stage Poets, and Play-House, I thought I could not employ my time better than in writing against them.’[111] Throughout the thesis we will meet characters who indulge in what was seen by many as immoral behaviour, and a close association between immorality and atheism can be seen, particularly in chapter 7. Many of these characters profess very little, if any, religious belief, so they cannot be seen as hypocrites. Hypocrisy manifests itself in those characters who, despite their apparent commitment to religious faith, behave in ways that are contradictory to religious expectations. In the plays, we will see examples of all kinds of immorality and, quite often, such characters embody more than one form - a licentious character might also be a drunkard or a glutton – an accumulation that Lady Desborough sees as 'the heap of Vice'.[112] Many of these characters are clerics, and this takes us to the next theme of anticlericalism.

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[106] John Vanbrugh, *The confederacy* (London, 1705), p. 61. Immorality is, of course, a subjective and judgemental term. The word was much used in this period, and it is included throughout this thesis in the context used by contemporaries. I imply no judgement of behaviour described as immoral.

[107] Josiah Woodward, *An account of the societies for reformation of manners in London and Westminster and other parts of the kingdom with a persuasive to persons of all ranks, to be zealous and diligent in promoting the execution of the laws agaist prophaneness and debauchery, for the effecting a national reformation* (London, 1699), p. 3.

[108] Ibid., ‘By the King, a proclamation’.

[109] Faramerz Dabhoiwala, 'Lust and liberty', *Past & Present* (2010), pp. 89-179, p. 99.

[110] Woodward, *An account of the societies for reformation of manners*, p. 4.

[111] Collier, *A short view*, ‘The preface’.

Anticlericalism

The plays include in their cast lists many clerical characters and most of these are shown as highly disreputable figures, frequently embodying characteristics such as idleness, drunkenness, corruptibility, gluttony, lechery and, most of all, hypocrisy. Even the names of the clerics are highly distinctive and are often used to denigrate – names such as Smerk, Doublechin, Wordy, Bull, Littlesense, Turbulent, Shittle, Wolf, Soaker, Tickletext, Sneake, Quibble, Humdrum, Dunce, Thummum, Pricknote, Noddy, Dogsears, Stiffrump, and Snuffle. These clerical characters probably amused many in the theatre audiences - 'Did your Lordship ever perceive that the Gentry were ever better pleas'd with a Play, than when the poor Parson was jeer'd?'.[113] But these portrayals also met with strong criticism. For some, they were seen as anticlerical contempt. As one anonymous pamphleteer wrote, 'to bring a Minister to ridicule him upon the Stage, must be merely the effect of the Author's Contempt of the Clergy … there is certainly no necessity for making the Priest or the Chaplain appear on the Stage'.[114] The most prominent critic of the stage in this period was Collier and the anticlericalism that lay beneath the clerical portrayals was one of his primary concerns set out in his chapter entitled '*The Clergy abused by the Stage*' (see section 2.3).[115]

The dramatists' use of polemical ambiguity sometimes added another dimension to their anticlerical attacks. By using established tropes of anti-Catholicism or anti-Puritanism, audiences could be shown a disreputable cleric not only as a representative of his own denomination, but also as a representative of the entire class of clerical hypocrites. Both in the plays and in the wider world, such criticisms were aimed at a wide range of religious adherents, including the parsons and chaplains of the restored Church of England.[116] As Collier observed, the playwrights 'attack Religion under every Form, and pursue the Priesthood through all the Subdivisions of Opinion. Neither Jews nor Heathens, Turks nor Christians, Rome nor Geneva, Church nor Conventicle, can escape them.'[117] Collier's use of the term 'Priesthood' in an undifferentiated way is an illustration of how this denominational ambiguity could be perceived. Both contemporary writers and modern scholars have articulated the notion that, for example, Catholic priests could be seen as also representing High Church clerics, and the term priestcraft was used in both cases.[118] In the same way, the attacks on Non-Jurors in the plays can be seen as attacks on the High Church party.

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[112] Behn, *The Roundheads*, p. 30.

[113] Anonymous, *The folly of priest-craft*, p. 16.

[114] Anonymous, *Animadversions on Mr Congreve's late answer to Mr Collier in a dialogue between Mr Smith and Mr Johnson, with the characters of the present poets, and some offers towards new-modeling the stage* (London, 1698), p. 59.

[115] Collier, *A short view*, pp. 97-139.

[116] Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The origins of sex : a history of the first sexual revolution* (London, 2013), p. 33.

Much of the evidence of anticlericalism in the plays relates to the institution of marriage. Most of the marriages in the plays take place off-stage and are carried out by clerics who are never seen and are not even given names. These unseen clerics usually seem to carry out their responsibilities diligently, as we hear few reports to the contrary. The most conspicuous example will be seen in *The Lancashire Witches* in chapter 8. Although two clerics – one Protestant and one Catholic – are involved in the main plot of the play, three marriages are carried out off-stage by an unseen cleric. By contrast, the clerical characters who appear on stage, and have agency within the plots of the plays, are often characters of a very different kind, reflecting a potent strain of anticlericalism. These portrayals degrade not only the reputation of the clergy but also the institution of marriage itself, as they are the very people who are responsible for carrying out the wedding ceremonies. This degradation is achieved through what the clerics say about marriage, their inaction in the face of attacks on it by other characters, their acceptance of concepts such as adultery, bigamy and polygamy, and their own indulgence in adulterous activity – a double fault in the case of the Catholic clerics who were sworn to celibacy. In some cases, the effect on the institution is so toxic that it raises questions about the nature of the comedy itself, and whether a wedding helps to bring a play to a happy ending, or whether marriage has become so tarnished that, by the end of the play, the comedy is compromised. There was specific criticism from John Cockburn in 1697 about the treatment of marriage:

> which has been so often burlesqu'd, and run down by the Licenciousness of the Stage. The Impious Railleries and profane Witticisms which have been uttered about this matter, are regarded as Maxims of undoubted Truth; those are laughed at who make Marriage their Choice, as they are pity'd who are under any necessity of engaging into it.[119]

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[117] Collier, *A short view*, pp. 110-1.

[118] Champion, *The pillars of priestcraft shaken*, p. 17; J.E. Bradley, 'Anti-Catholicism as Anglican anticlericalism' in Nigel Aston and Matthew Cragoe, *Anticlericalism in Britain, c. 1500-1914* (Stroud, 2001), p. 69.

[119] John Cockburn, *The dignity and duty of a married state in a sermon preach'd at the celebration of a marriage in the English Episcopal Church at Amsterdam* (London, 1697), 'Preface'.

The link between anticlericalism and attitudes to marriage will be explored in more detail in section 5.1.

The anticlericalism shown in the attacks on the clergy can also be seen in attacks on the Church of England itself. Viewed through an anticlerical lens, church ceremonies such as marriage were sometimes seen as a system for increasing the power and wealth of the Church and its ministers. In 1680, the Whig lawyer William Lawrence condemned the 'absurd and ridiculous Ceremonies' of the Church and argued that marriage is 'not to fill Priests pockets with money, or to satisfie their insatiable Covetousness, and Ambition'.[120] Champion stresses the centrality of this anticlericalism and what was seen by the Freethinkers and Deists as 'the corrupt priestcraft of established religion.' He examines 'the clash between the Freethinker and the priest over the nature of true religion.'[121] Champion argues that the Freethinkers did not deny God but 'were concerned to debunk the false authority of the Church.' He disputes the 'interpretive fault' that the Freethinkers were attacking religion itself and argues that they sought to purify religion by overthrowing the irreligious and tyrannical priests.[122] This attack on what had become labelled as priestcraft is also reflected in the plays. A search of Early English Books online confirms Goldie's observation that the first use of the term 'priestcraft' in the title of a printed text is the anonymous pamphlet play of 1690 *The Folly of Priestcraft* that will be examined in section 4.2.[123]

Many clerical characters showed little respect for their marriage duties and endorsed adultery – and even indulged in it themselves. The popularity of such plays shows that these attitudes continued to be seen as acceptable entertainment. This enduring denigration does not seem to have been inhibited by the antitheatricality onslaught at the end of the century, the campaign for the Reformation of Manners, or the very different attitude of the court of William and Mary, compared to that of Charles II and James II. Although the later playwrights no longer had the protection (or at least the acquiescence) of the Court, they continued their denigration of the clerics.

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[120] William Lawrence, *Marriage by the morall law of God vindicated* (London, 1680), pp. 127, 135.

[121] Champion, *The pillars of priestcraft shaken*, 'Abstract'.

[122] Ibid., pp. 6, 9, 24.

[123] Anonymous, *The folly of priest-craft*; Mark Goldie, 'Priestcraft and the birth of Whiggism' in N. T. Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (ed), *Political discourse in early modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 219. For scholarship on priestcraft see also Champion, *The pillars of priestcraft shaken* and Spaeth, *The Church in an age of danger*.

2 THE STAGE, THE PULPIT, AND THE STATE

This chapter will set the context for an examination of the plays by exploring the place of drama in wider society. Drama is not, of course, restricted to the stage and this chapter will consider other forms of theatricality in the state and the pulpit, and how these relate to the dramatic art. It will also examine two ways in which the stage was subjected to influence from outside – antitheatricality and censorship. The disrespectful attitude to religion in the plays sometimes led to censorship and was a primary theme in the antitheatricals' attack on the stage.

The theatres may have been closed in England for most of the 1640s and 1650s, but civil war, the execution of a king, and an intense religiosity ensured that an element of austere public theatricality remained.[1] It is interesting to note that a famous image of the king's execution was included in a 1649 book with a title that adopts theatrical metaphors - *Tragicum theatrum actorum*.[2] The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 brought with it the reopening of the London theatres and the development of new forms of dramatic entertainment, together with a more exuberant form of public theatricality. Charles II was a man possessed of a strong sense of theatre. Paula Backscheider observes many interesting correlations between public theatricality and power in this period. She argues that Charles II understood the impact of theatre and 'made London a national theatre' to help secure his regime and that 'at no time in English history have the court and the theatre been so close.'[3]

2.1 Liminality between the stage and the pulpit

Another area of public life where dramatic potential was exploited was the pulpit. Jeanne Shami describes the early modern sermon as 'a living, dramatic experience', and identifies similarities between the pulpit and the stage, and the congregation and the audience.[4] Religion remained a potent force throughout the period but, particularly in London, the theatres now provided some cultural competition through a reinvigorated form of public entertainment and engagement. It was inevitable that these two cultural activities would not be able to ignore each other and that this would, at times, lead to controversy and conflict, but also to some exchanges and sharing of language and behaviour. This section will explore how theatricality was used by clerics and actors, and how these clerical performances and performing clerics contributed to a liminality between the pulpit and the playhouse.

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[1] Katrin Beushausen, *Theatre and the English public from Reformation to Revolution* (Cambridge, 2018), p. 269.

[2] Anonymous, *Tragicum theatrum actorum* (Amsterdam, 1649), p. 185.

[3] Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular politics : theatrical power and mass culture in early modern England* (Baltimore ; London, 1993), pp. 2, 62. Ronald Hutton entitled the conclusion of his biography of Charles II 'Monarch in a Masquerade'. Hutton, *Charles the second*.

[4] Jeanne Shami 'The Sermon' in Hiscock and Wilcox (ed), *Oxford Handbook*, pp. 195-199.

In the Prologue to *The English Frier* (1690), Crowne observed that 'Priests are good Actors' and there are some key examples of the dramatic power and theatricality of prominent clerics in the period.[5] The ministers ejected from the Church of England by the *Act of Uniformity* gave farewell sermons in August 1662. These sermons were given in a multiplicity of churches across the country on what became known as Black Bartholomew's Day. This concurrence of so many similar sermons at the same moment was itself an event of significant theatricality. One of the preachers, Edward Hancock saw them as 'but seeming Actors in a play in this world'.[6] Also, as David Appleby has observed, many of them had been trained in a range of dramatic skills, including rhetoric and gesticulation, to ensure that their sermons had a powerful impact.[7] Like actors, they knew how to play to their audiences.

This strong sense of theatricality was shared by Collier. As a Non-Juror, Collier refused to swear an oath to William and Mary and, as a result, lost his place in the Church of England. He engaged in furious pamphlet debates and had two brief periods in prison after writing a pamphlet against William III, and later when accused of communicating with James II.[8] He achieved a new level of notoriety in 1696 when he intervened on the public stage in a highly dramatic gesture. Executions were still public events at this time and the intense theatre of the beheading of Charles I was still within living memory for some and was regularly commemorated by many. When two men who were implicated in an attempted assassination of William III were brought to execution, Collier mounted the scaffold and gave them absolution before escaping. For this 'performance', he was declared an outlaw.[9] When this performing cleric turned his dramatic invective against the stage, he also set himself up as a theatre critic. He stated that the dramatists 'strain their Invention and their Malice' and that he was not impressed with the quality of their invention - he wrote that 'The Abuse is often both gross and clumsey, and the Wit as wretched as the Manners.' He rejected any idea that the playwrights were qualified to criticise the clergy – 'Is the Pulpit under the Discipline of the Stage? And are those fit to correct the Church, that are not fit to come into it?'[10]

One of the ironies of the Collier Controversy is that antitheatricality became an obsession for a man who himself lived a very dramatic life that was easy to satirise. Many of the attacks on Collier in both the pamphlets and the plays were of a satirical nature. As Clotilde Thouret has observed, playwrights had always been particularly skilled and inventive in their use of polemical devices to defend the stage and attack its critics.[11] One of these devices was to portray Collier as an actor, neatly blurring the edges of the worlds of the pulpit and the stage. William Congreve, one of the playwrights attacked by Collier, wrote in one of his pamphlets: ‘Now let us take a View of Mr. Collier, as he appears upon the Stage; for while he is examining of Plays; I look upon him as one who has Eloped from his Pulpit and Strayed within the inclosures of the Theatre’.[12] At the end of Durfey’s play *The Old Mode and the New* (1703), the speaker of the epilogue says that Collier has been spied in the theatre – ‘He hates all Oaths, and such rude blustring Folly; / But cants and lies like any Side box Molly.’[13] Another of Collier’s targets was the playwright Thomas Baker, who fought back in the dedicatory epistle to his play *An Act at Oxford* (1704). Baker mocked Collier by implying that he was a jealous actor:

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[5] John Crowne, *The English frier* (London, 1690), 'Prologue'.
[6] Quoted in David Appleby, *Black Bartholomew's day : preaching, polemic and restoration nonconformity* (Manchester, 2012), p. 59.
[7] Ibid., pp. 59, 82.
[8] Eric Salmon, 'Jeremy Collier' in *Oxford dictionary of national biography* , 5917.
[9] Sister Rose Anthony, *The Jeremy Collier stage controversy, 1698-1726* (New York, 1966), pp. 4-6.
[10] Collier, *A short view*, pp. 98, 111, 138-9.

> I won't say, that some of the Great Sticklers against the Theatre, hate to see any Act but themselves, and can't endure to be out-done in Personating Men of Religion, Justice, and Loyalty, by those that tread the Stage: But their Living in a Practice which they can't bear to see Represented, plainly evinces they think there is no Sin but Scandal.[14]

One anonymous pamphleteer defended the stage by turning Collier’s accusation of immorality back onto the pulpit. The writer saw the preacher as an actor – ‘why should not that Parson make up a Character in a Comedy, and be personated by a Player, who personates a Player in the Pulpit, and interlopes upon the Stage, by turning the Church into a Play-house?’[15]

Collier was not the only cleric with a dramatic reputation. Henry Sacheverell, in his sermon at St Pauls in November 1709, turned his intensely dramatic language on a range of religious and political targets. His sermon was seen as an attack on the principles and culture of the Glorious Revolution, and it resulted in Sacheverell’s impeachment.[16] His trial took place in Westminster Hall, and it was a highly theatrical event. One foreign observer saw the setting as a ‘makeshift theatre’.[17] In anticipation of large audience numbers, Christopher Wren was asked to provide additional seating. The high drama of the event even drew audiences away from the theatres.[18] As well as the staging, Sacheverell gave a winning performance. Sarah Cowper wrote that Sacheverell was more suited to ‘a Bear-garden or Punch’s Theatre’.[19] A witness wrote to a friend and described ‘the great Scene of the Doctor’s Performance’ was so contrary to what he had previously said that he did not just deliver a written speech but ‘only perform’d his Part like an Actor’.[20] This analysis was also applied to Sacheverell’s original sermon as he was accused at his trial of having harangued his audience with ‘Malice, Bitterness, Reviling, Insolence, endeavouring to raise in his Auditors the Passions [he] himself put on’.[21] This skill of ‘putting on’ a passion is, of course, fundamental to drama.

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[11] Clotilde Thouret, 'Between jest and earnest: Ironical defenses of theatre in seventeenth-century England and France', *Restoration & 18th Century Theatre Research,* 29 (2014), pp. 35-55, pp. 37-38.

[12] William Congreve, *Amendments of M. Collier's false and imperfect citations, &c. from the Old batchelour, Double dealer, Love for love, Mourning bride* (London, 1698), pp. 76-77.

[13] Thomas Durfey, *The old mode & the new* (London, 1703), ‘Epilogue’.

[14] Thomas Baker, *An act at Oxford* (London, 1704), ‘To the right honourable Edward Lord Dudley and Ward’.

[15] Anonymous, *The immorality of the English pulpit as justly subjected to the notice of the English stage, as the immorality of the stage is to that of the pulpit. In a letter to Mr Collier. Occasion'd by the third chapter of his book entitl'd, A short view of the immorality of the English stage, &c* (London, 1698), p. 8.

[16] Mark Knights, 'Introduction: The view from 1710', *Parliamentary History,* 31 (2012), pp. 1-15, pp. 3-5.

As well as satirizing clerics, the dramatists also saw connections between the cleric and the actor, and the stage and the pulpit. The adoption of the ways of the theatre by the pulpit can be seen in Thomas Rawlins’ *Tunbridge Wells* (1678). The poet Witless claims that ‘the canting Pulpit has borrowed from my strain, t'inhance its reputation.’[22] This borrowed strain is also reflected in Wycherley’s 1675 description of a chaplain as a ‘Pulpit Comedian’.[23] Some dramatists drew comparisons with the church when they were bewailing the drop in popularity of the stage. Roger Boyle reported in 1694 that ‘Sermons at first were follow'd, then the Stage … they neither are frequented now’.[24] In *The Conquest of China by the Tartars* (1676), Settle questioned the reasons people went to church and the theatre. He sees it not for the primary content – ‘That Mode of Liking Plays is as much out, / As 'tis to go to Church to be Devout.’ The real reason is the same in both cases – ‘Much the same Business brings you to both Places’ and that business is to mix in ‘Good Company’.[25] This motivation will be explored in chapter 7, where social conformity is considered as a form of atheism.

Another element of liminality is the idea of drama as a reforming force. In the opening paragraph of his Introduction to *A Short View*, Collier wrote that ‘The business of plays is to recommend virtue and discountenance vice’. The fault of the stage was that it did not meet this responsibility and so, as he saw it, the theatres were ‘Like Cannon seized they are pointed the wrong way'.[26] But many playwrights saw the stage as the equal, if not the better, instructor. The playwright Edward Ravenscroft wrote in 1687 that 'when Ill Manners and Ill Principles Reign in a State, it is the business of the Stage, as well as Pulpits, to declaim and Instruct'.[27] Dryden argues that on the stage 'patterns of piety, decently represented, and equally removed from the extremes of superstition and Prophaneness, may be of excellent use to second the Precepts of our Religion.'[28] Settle saw drama sharing the duty of the pulpit, as the playwright 'In a Smart Prologue, or Satyrick Play, / He tells you of your Sins, as well as They.'[29] This image of the stage as pulpit is shared by Vanbrugh who apologises for his play *Aesop* (1697):

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[17] Quoted in Brian Cowan, 'The spin doctor: Sacheverell's trial speech and political performance in the divided society', ibid.pp. 28-46, p. 31.
[18] Colley Cibber and B. R. S. Fone, *An apology for the life of Colley Cibber : with an historical view of the stage during his own time* (Ann Arbor, 1968), p. 230.
[19] Quoted in Knights, *The devil in disguise*, p. 162.
[20] Arthur Maynwaring, *Four letters to a friend in north Britain, upon the publishing the tryal of Dr Sacheverell* (London, 1710), pp, 10-11.
[21] Quoted in Knights, 'Introduction: The view from 1710', p. 6.
[22] Thomas Rawlins, *Tunbridge Wells* (London, 1678), p. 13.
[23] William Wycherley, *The country wife* (London, 1675), p. 65.
[24] Roger Boyle, *Herod the Great* (London, 1694), ‘Prologue’.
[25] Elkanah Settle, *The conquest of China by the Tartars* (London, 1676), ‘Prologue’.

> There's nothing in't, with which we use to please ye:
> With down right dull Instruction, w'are to tease ye,
> The stage turns Pulpit; and the World's so fickle,
> The Play-House in a whim, turns Conventicle.'[30]

In *Sir Salomom* (1671), John Caryll coined a phrase that demonstrates perfectly this liminality, 'a Stage-Sermon, or a Pulpit-Play: / Both Trade in Lofty-Sounds, and can Dispense / With the Formalities of Wit and Sense.'[31] This shared 'Trade in Lofty-Sounds' shows that both the stage and the pulpit were seen as performance spaces. Performance is not a one-way process with a preacher or an actor performing - both require an audience, and the expectation is that the audience will be affected by what they see and hear. The consequences of this shared performance can be profound - the senses can be inspired, unsettled, and even transformed by the experience.[32]

The liminality of the stage and the pulpit is also reflected in the way in which they borrowed language from each other. Some playwrights were especially provocative by using religious language as sexual metaphors. An important example of this is in George Etherege's *The Man of Mode* (1676). As well as writing plays, Etherege was a diplomat and a gentleman of the privy chamber-in-ordinary to Charles II. He remained deeply loyal to the Stuart cause and organized elaborate celebrations for the birth of James II's son in July 1688. After the Glorious Revolution he joined James II in exile and probably converted to Catholicism. His first play established his reputation as a wit and he became part of the circle of Court Wits, a group of flashy poets, playwrights, and noblemen who flourished after the Restoration.[33] The term 'Court Wits' had been in use throughout the seventeenth century, for example in Jonson's *Every Man out of His Humor*. John Harold Wilson defined the Court Wits as a distinctive group of gentlemen amateurs, most of whom could 'boast of some achievement in the literary arts'.[34] In *The Man of Mode*, casual religious similes appear right from the start. On the first page Dorimant bewails his reluctance at having to write a billet-doux to the lover he is planning to reject and compares it to the reluctance of the 'fanatick' to pay 'Church Duties'.[35] Later in the first scene, two of Dorimant's friends compare their attitudes to love and marriage using religious metaphors of faith, conversion, doubts, and salvation. Dorimant is often described as a devil but, like many charming villains in world drama, he can seduce both his lovers and the audience. His soon-to-be-ex lover Loveit uses religious metaphors to make the point - 'I know he is a Devil, but he has something of the Angel yet undefac'd in him, which Makes him so charming and agreeable, that I Must love him be he never so wicked.' Religious metaphors provide much of the richness in the sexual skirmishing between Dorimant and his potential new lover Harriet. At their first meeting, Harriet asks Dorimant if he could 'keep a Lent for a Mistriss?' to which Dorimant immediately answers 'In expectation of a happy Easter'. The resurrection is the primary event in the Christian faith and comparing it to his own post-Lent uprising could have been heard as potentially blasphemous by those who understood the metaphor. In a later scene, Harriet describes Dorimant's promiscuity as 'the common Sanctuary for all young Women who run from their Relations' and observes that 'signs of repentance' are to be mistrusted in 'men who have been long harden'd in Sin' - a metaphor unlikely to be heard in church. Dorimant says he will persevere as he is driven by the 'prospect of such a Heav'n' and offers to 'renounce all the joys I have in friendship and in Wine, sacrifice to you all the interest I have in other Women'. Harriet's riposte that she would allow Dorimant some leeway also uses religious metaphors - 'Though I wish you devout, I would not have you turn Fanatick'.[36] Etherege's purpose is to establish that the relationship between Harriet and Dorimant flies at a higher level than Dorimant's previous relationships, and religious language provides an excellent way of achieving this.

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[26] Collier, *A short view*, p. 1.
[27] Edward Ravenscroft, *Titus Andronicus* (London, 1687), 'To the reader'.
[28] John Dryden, *Tyrannick love, or, The royal martyr a tragedy* (London, 1670), 'Preface'.
[29] Settle, *The conquest of China by the Tartars*, 'Prologue'.
[30] John Vanbrugh, *Aesop* (London, 1697), 'Prologue'.
[31] John Caryll, *Sir Salomon* (London, 1671), 'Prologue'.
[32] Jeanne Shami, 'The Sermon', p. 198; Ramie Targoff, 'The performance of prayer: Sincerity and theatricality in early modern England', *Representations* (1997), pp. 49-69, p. 50.

Despite the dubious reputation of the theatre among clerics, there are many examples of the use of stage metaphors in their sermons. Describing the world as a theatre or a stage were frequently used metaphors. John Wall entitled a 1662 sermon as 'A divine theater, or, A stage for Christians', and refers to the 'Great Amphitheater of the round world'.[37] Other descriptions of the world include 'uncomfortable Stage', 'the Theatre of beings', and 'the Stage of Human Affairs.'[38] The rhetoric is given an additional turn by putting God in the audience as in 'How shall I be able with my guilty Conscience to appear upon that huge Theatre, before God, Angels, and Men?' and 'The World is a great Stage, Men are the Actors, God and Angels are the Spectators and Lookers on; therefore all must be done in God's presence.'[39] George Hickes deepened God's metaphorical engagement with the theatre. In explaining the creation, he cast God as the dramatist, theatre-owner, and stage manager:

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[33] John Barnard, 'Sir George Etherege' in *ODNB Online*, 8923.

[34] Ben Jonson, *Every man out of his humor* (London, 1616), p. 160; John Harold Wilson, *The Court Wits of the Restoration; an introduction* (New York, 1967), p. 6.

[35] George Etherege, *The man of mode* (London, 1676), p. 1.

[36] Ibid., pp. 23, 47, 87-88.

> Certainly the seasonable contrivance of so many wonderful Scenes into every Act, and of so many curious Acts into one harmonious Play, must needs have been the study and invention of a very skilful Author, even of the All-wise, and Almighty Dramatist; who hath the World for his Theatre, and seldom less than a Kingdom for his Stage.[40]

The last judgement was described by William Sancroft in 1666 as 'that horrid Theatre of the Divine Judgments'.[41] Death was also expressed in stage metaphors such as 'Begin then to con our part, when we are ready to be hist off the Stage, and Death is now pulling off our properties' and 'We know not how soon we may be called off the Stage.'[42] When addressing the question of the length of the human life, John Dunton asked 'Dost not thou see, how upon the Stage of this World, some have longer parts, and some have shorter?'[43] The world is not the only thing that is portrayed as a theatre. Thomas Manton described the Gospel and the conscience as theatres.[44]

This section has shown examples of theatricality, both on the stage and in the pulpit. The highly dramatic portrayals of clerical hypocrites in the plays savaged the reputation of the clergy, and the way in which clerics used dramatic skills to enhance their writing and preaching reached their apotheosis in the dazzling performances by Sacheverell and Collier. The section also explored points of liminality between two worlds which were in opposition in so many ways. Despite their mutual antagonism, they borrowed metaphors from each other to add dramatic power to their performances, even to the extremes of ‘the Almighty Dramatist’ and the resurrection as a sexual metaphor.

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[37] John Wall, *A divine theater, or, A stage for Christians* (Oxford, 1662), 'The Epistle Dedicatory'.

[38] John Scott, *A sermon preached at the funeral of the Lady Newland. At Alhallows Barkin, London* (London, 1690), p. 4; George Hickes, *A sermon preached at the Cathedral Church of Worcester* (London, 1684), p. 24.

[39] John Dunton, *Dunton's remains, or, The dying pastour's last legacy to his friends and parishioners* (London, 1684), p. 115; Thomas Manton, *A fourth volume containing one hundred and fifty sermons* (London, 1693), p. 95.

[40] Hickes, *A sermon preached at the Cathedral Church of Worcester*, p. 30.

[41] William Sancroft, *Lex ignea, or, The school of righteousness* (London, 1666), p. 11.

[42] Ibid., p. 28; Nathaniel Wanley, *Peace and rest for the upright* (London, 1681), p. 14.

[43] Dunton, *Dunton's remains*, p. 157.

[44] Manton, *A fourth volume*, pp. 175, 1071.

2.2 Distinctiveness of drama

Although there are interesting similarities in the ways these two worlds use theatricality, there are also many differences. This raises the question of what are the characteristics of drama that distinguish it from other cultural forms? Drama has a dynamism and complexity that other forms do not match. This is not simply because it allows for dialogue and debate, as this can be found in other media. For example, Jacob Halford has identified over 2,000 non-dramatic dialogues published in England in the long seventeenth century.[45] Drama’s dynamism arises from the constantly changing plotlines and the matrix of characters with complex interrelationships. Characters under attack can be placed amongst other characters in a plot that changes through the course of a play in a way that was not usual in other forms. In some cases, this allowed for transformations, as we will see in *The City Ramble* (1711) in section 2.3. These features allow a much wider range of complexities, even in plays that take a polemical position.

Drama also provides an environment that permits, and even encourages, disorder and mischief. Lake sees the early modern theatre as a ‘playpen’, which some modern directors would see as a very fitting description of life in the rehearsal room. Lake also sees drama as a ‘festive liminal space’ which is less effective in containing ‘visions of disorder and deviance, of a world turned upside down’.[46] This sense of play reflects Mikhail Bakhtin’s ideas about carnival. Bakhtin sees carnival as celebrating ‘temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order’.[47] As we will see, one of the ways that the plays of this period undermined the established order is through their anticlericalism. Playgoers would be able to escape temporarily from a world where religion and its representatives were treated with respect and enter the revelry of a world where religion was, at the very least, unsettled. This urge to unsettle an audience was shared by preachers like Sacheverell and Collier. For them, as for the dramatists, theatricality was a powerfully unsettling device. Drama can create an alternative time and/or place for the audience, and we will see how effectively the plays take us back to earlier periods and use memory to address current issues. There is also much plotting in the plays - like masks and disguises, the plot is a theatrical concept, so drama offers a highly suitable medium for watching plots develop and unravel.

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[45] Jacob Halford, '*'Of dialogue, that great and powerful art' : a study of the dialogue genre in seventeenth-century England*' (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 2016), p. 58.

[46] Peter Lake and Michael C. Questier, *The Antichrist's lewd hat : Protestants, Papists and players in post-Reformation England* (New Haven ; London, 2002), pp. xx, xxxi.

[47] M. I. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world* (Bloomington, Ind., 1984), p. 10.

Anthony Horneck (1641–1697) was a Church of England clergyman, a believer in witchcraft, a supporter of the movement for the reformation of manners, and one of William III's chaplains.[48] In 1690 he published a book in which he asked the rhetorical question of whether the prospect of the day of judgement should lead people to abandon 'all the sensual and carnal Delights of Men'.[49] He then examined various 'delights' to test whether they were likely to have an effect on a person's salvation. He considered music, books, drinking, cards, feasting, clothes, and dancing. His final topic, and by far the longest section, is the 'delight in Seeing and going to Stage plays'.[50] His attack on the stage is a precursor to Collier's later diatribe, but he made similar accusations about immorality, profanation, and the ridiculing of religion. Horneck's book will feature in the conclusion of this thesis but, in this section, it is interesting to consider his view on the issue of the distinctiveness of drama. He contrasts the theatre with reading and declares it to be a more dangerous place because it appeals to the senses rather than to reason:

> there is a great difference between reading a thing, and seeing it acted with all the vanity and boldness that usually attends it. In reading, a man's serious thoughts are not dispersed or scattered, but keep within the compass of modesty and weigh things in the balance of reason; whereas being Acted to the life, they naturally strike vanity into the mind, affect the sensual part, drive away seriousness, and leave an unhappy tincture behind them.[51]

Robert Phiddian engages with this difference between reading and the theatre and argues, like Horneck, that the theatre has the power to amplify emotions.[52] Most playwrights, theatre managers, and stage directors, then and now, would probably agree that successful drama should incorporate the very things that Horneck and others saw as a danger – an appeal to the emotions, unpredictability, an unsettling of conventions, disrespect for authority, a charge of sexual energy, and Bakhtin's 'liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order'.[53]

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[48] W. R. Ward, 'Anthony Horneck' in *ODNB Online*, 13801.

[49] Anthony Horneck, *The sirenes, or, Delight and judgment represented in a discourse concerning the great day of judgment and its power to damp and imbitter sensual delights, sports, and recreations* (London, 1690), p. 7.

[50] Ibid., 'The Summary of the whole Discourse'.

[51] Ibid., p. 200.

[52] Robert Phiddian, 'Spectacular Opposition. Suppression, Deflection and the Performance of Contempt in John Gay's Beggar's Opera and Polly' in Mark Knights and Adam Morton (ed), *The power of laughter and satire in early modern Britain : political and religious culture, 1500-1800* (Woodbridge, 2017), p. 151.

There is another characteristic of the theatre that sets it apart from most other media of the time and heightens the danger perceived by Collier, Horneck, and others - attending a performance is an activity shared by large numbers of people. They enter a confined space to share the experience of watching a play that they have chosen, probably with eager anticipation. Audience members not only share the space but they also spark off each other, and this tends to raise what Horneck called the 'sensual part' of the mind. This is most palpable in laughter. An individual, and even a small audience, are less likely to find their emotions raised to the point of loud laughter, but a large audience tends to find the freedom to laugh loudly in its shared environment. When the subject of the comedy is religion, it is not difficult to imagine how that must have infuriated Collier and Horneck.

Stepping inside a theatre auditorium should always be an exciting venture into an alternative world that can, sometimes, unsettle the accepted norms of society, and present challenges to authority. In the plays of this period, we will see how the authority of religious institutions are undermined through the behaviour of their adherents and clerical characters. Such challenges to religious authority may have been frowned upon in society but, in the theatre, a space existed where such attitudes were tolerated and even enjoyed. This challenge to religious authority and the negative portrayals of religious characters were two of the principal causes of deep concern to the antitheatricals, to whom we now turn.

2.3 Antitheatricality

Antitheatricality has a long history, and critics of the stage were rarely absent in early modern England, but there were moments when the issue flared up and gained wider attention.[54] The support for the stage from Charles II and James II meant that antitheatricality got little traction during their reigns. This royal enthusiasm was also shared by Mary II but not by her husband. After Mary's death in 1694 the climate was set fair for the opponents of the stage. In 1698, as we have already seen, Collier created a storm by launching his ferocious attack on the stage, and religious issues were central to his attack. The pamphlet storm that erupted after the publication of *A Short View* is often known as the Collier Controversy. Collier's prominent role, both as a Non-Juror and the leading voice in the antitheatricality debate, linked these two developments in ways that the playwrights would exploit. Scholars have argued that there was little in *A Short View* that was original.[55] But, as Michael Cordner observed, Collier transformed the debate by including extensive detailed evidence from the plays to support his arguments about the immodesty and profaneness of the stage, and its abuse of the clergy.[56] Some of the playwrights attacked by Collier rose to the challenge and wrote pamphlets defending themselves and attacking Collier. They also added defensive prefaces to the published editions of some of their plays. Before turning to the plays, some context needs to be outlined on the religious and historical background, the pamphlet debates, and the scholarship on antitheatricality.

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[53] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, p. 10.

[54] The most significant moment before Collier was the publication of William Prynne's *Histrio-Matrix* (1633). These and later events are eloquently explored in Lisa A. Freeman, *Antitheatricality and the body public* (Philadelphia, 2017).

The Collier Controversy has been the subject of much eminent scholarship. The most detailed analysis of the controversy was published in 1966 by Sister Rose Anthony, who examined Collier's works together with more than seventy plays and pamphlets that engaged with the controversy between 1698 and 1726. Thirty of these were published within two years of *A Short View*, but publications continued at a steady rate until 1711.[57] There was then a lull until 1717 when the production of Colley Cibber's new play *The Non-Juror* launched a new phase of the controversy, which did not die down until the late 1720s.

Anthony analyses eighteen publications in the six months following *A Short View*'s arrival. All but three of these defend the stage and attack Collier, including works by the playwrights Gildon, Motteaux, Dryden, Dennis, Vanbrugh, Durfey, and Congreve.[58] It is an interesting counter-factual question whether the controversy might have died down quickly if the dramatists had stayed silent. But they did not, and the controversy became highly charged and lasted for a considerable time. Collier himself published further pamphlets defending his position in 1699, 1700, 1703, and 1708 and, on each occasion, the dramatists rose to the challenge and prolonged the dispute. Collier received some pamphlet support, although it is interesting to note that most of these were written anonymously until Arthur Bedford entered the fray in 1705. It can be assumed that William III had some sympathy with Collier's position as, after the publication of *A Short View*, he granted Collier a *nolo prosequi*, effectively cancelling his outlaw status.[59]

Hume sees Collier's attack as a symptom rather than the cause of the controversy.[60] Lund argues that there is little in Collier that was new because a climate of moral reform and antitheatricality had already been established. He does recognise, however, that Collier's focus on the abuse of clergy was rooted in a concern that the clergy were under attack from all sides, including the stage.[61] The issue of the challenge to authority mentioned above is reflected in Lisa Freeman's convincing case that Collier's mode of attack was to argue that the immorality of the stage was founded on a different set of principles which, as they did not arise from authority (and particularly the divine kind), were really no principles at all. Freeman believes that what infuriated Collier most was that the stage offered alternative 'truths' about power and authority to the 'one divinely ordained hierarchical truth' that was fundamental to his beliefs, a similar perspective to Bakhtin's mentioned above.[62] Williams argues that supporters of the stage were correct to insist in their defence that most plays 'were written not merely to divert but also out of good intention and for instruction in virtuous living'.[63] I am not convinced by this argument and I agree with Cordner that the playwrights were constrained by the crisis that had engulfed them and needed to mount some form of defence, even if it involved contradicting their earlier intentions. For example, Cordner cites Vanbrugh who, in his defence of *The Provok'd Wife* (1697), a play much attacked by Collier, would be forced to deny 'the true nature of the laughter his comedy was designed to provoke.'[64] Despite the protestations of innocence by the dramatists and some exaggeration by the antitheatricals, we will see in the plays sufficient examples of profanity and anticlericalism to substantiate the key themes of Collier's analysis.

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[55] Joseph Wood Krutch, *Comedy and conscience after the Restoration* (New York, 1949), p. 96; Lund, *Ridicule, religion and the politics of wit in Augustan England*, p. 70.
[56] Michael Cordner, 'Playwright versus priest' in Payne Fisk, *The Cambridge companion to English Restoration theatre*, p. 210.
[57] Anthony, *Collier*, pp. vii-xii.
[58] Ibid., pp. 58-136.
[59] Cibber and Fone, *An apology for the life of Colley Cibber*, p. 151.
[60] Robert D. Hume, 'Jeremy Collier and the future of the London theater in 1698', *Studies in Philology,* 96 (1999), pp. 480-511, p. 486.

At a fundamental level there was a dispute in this controversy about the purpose of drama. Section 2.1 considered whether drama was seen as a reforming force and here we turn to the question of whether it should reflect the faults of society. Vanbrugh began the Prologue to *The Provok'd Wife* with a statement about the 'Intent and Business of the Stage' which was 'To Copy out the Follies of the Age; / To hold to every Man a Faithful Glass, / And shew him of what Species he's an Ass.'[65] In Tom Brown's *The Stage Beaux Toss'd in a Blanket* (1704), Dorimant says that Collier had missed out the virtues of the stage, one of which is that it 'ridicules Hypocrisie and Avarice; the first ruining Religion, the latter the State; so the Stage is the Champion of the Church and State'.[66] In their attempt to shift the blame for the lewdness of the stage, the dramatists suggested alternative catalysts. Dryden saw the Court of Charles II as the source of the problem – 'a banisht Court, with Lewdness fraught, / The Seeds of open

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[61] Lund, *Ridicule, religion and the politics of wit in Augustan England*, pp. 70, 82.

[62] Freeman, *Antitheatricality*, pp. 104, 108.

[63] Aubrey Williams, 'No cloistered virtue: Or, playwright versus priest in 1698', *PMLA,* 90 (1975), pp. 234-46, p. 244.

[64] Cordner, 'Playwright versus priest', pp. 215, 223.

[65] Vanbrugh, *The provok'd wife*, 'Prologue'.

[66] Thomas Brown, *The stage-beaux toss'd in a blanket: or, hypocrisie alamode; expos'd in a true picture of Jerry ----- a pretending scourge to the English stage* (London, 1704), p. 12.

Vice returning brought.'[67] George Granville disagreed and, picking up Vanbrugh's glass image, wrote that the fault lies with the audience - 'We hold the Glass, and but reflect your Shame'.[68] Baker attributed the cause more widely to 'the Decay of Manners, and General Depravity' and, again adopting the imagery of the mirror, observed that it was 'a melancholy Consideration to find the Age so Dissolute, that 'tis painful to see its own Reflection'. He added that 'I appeal to the most Zealous and Severe, if they can charge one Play with anything in Representation, which is not to be found in Life; every Crime there Copied, may be too surely fitted with plenty of Originals'.[69] These metaphors of reflection supported the idea that the stage could not be responsible for the deficiencies of the world at large. Collier agreed that the purpose of the stage was to 'expose the Singularities of Pride and Fancy, to make Folly and Falsehood contemptible' but, for him, a passive reflection of folly was not acceptable - action was needed to correct the folly.[70]

The first play that engaged with the antitheatricality controversy was *The Campaigners* (1698) by Thomas Durfey. Durfey was a prolific writer, as his thirty-two plays and his 'many occasional panegyrics, obsequies, and odes, and collections of verse, published at regular intervals, attest'. He became one of the intimates of Charles II but did not enjoy the favour of James II. He eventually transferred his allegiance to the Whigs after the Glorious Revolution, once the new regime was established.[71] *The Campaigners* was first performed and published in 1698, just a few months after Collier's *Short View,* and there is a sense of changes being made in real time as the controversy developed. Durfey tells us that he 'had once design'd another kind of Preface to my Comedy than what will appear in the following sheets'.[72] But the impact of *A Short View* led Durfey to write a pamphlet-length Preface to the published edition of the play - this attacked Collier as 'a late horrible Severe and Rigid Critick'.[73] Durfey also included in the published edition a satirical fable entitled *The Dog and the Otter*, which also attacked Collier. Although the spoken text of *The Campaigners* does not engage with the controversy, there is a relevant song in Act IV (set to music by Henry Purcell). Durfey requires some musical entertainment at this point in the play and, although the dialogue before and after the song makes no reference to its content, Durfey takes this opportunity to savage Collier. In the song, Collier is portrayed as an out-of-work cleric whose anger is turned towards the stage; he is one of the 'stubborn Non-Jurors, / For want of Employment, now scourge the lewd times'. If there is any doubt that Collier is his target, this is quickly dismissed a few lines later – 'Dull Clod-pated Ralliers, Smiths, Cobblers and Colliers, / Have damn'd all our Rhimes.' The song concludes with a condemnation of Collier for his absolution on the scaffold and his refusal to acknowledge William and Mary as sovereigns:

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[67] John Vanbrugh, *The pilgrim* (London, 1700), 'Epilogue. [by Dryden, J.]'
[68] George Granville, *The Jew of Venice* (London, 1701), p. 47.
[69] Baker, *An act at Oxford*, 'To the right honourable Edward Lord Dudley and Ward.'
[70] Collier, *A short view*, p. 1.
[71] Jonathan Pritchard, 'Thomas D'Urfey' in *ODNB Online*, 8313.
[72] Thomas Durfey, *The campaigners, or, The pleasant adventures at Brussels a comedy* (London, 1698), p. 1.
[73] Ibid., 'To the Right Honourable Thomas, Lord Wharton'.

> But let State revolvers,
> And Treason-Absolvers,
> Excuse if I sing
> The Scoundrel that chooses
> To cry down the Muses,
> Would cry down the King.[74]

Settle joined the assault on Collier in his comedy *The City-Ramble.* The main plot of this play is drawn from work by Beaumont and Fletcher, but the relevance here is the framing of the play. Settle introduces the family of a Common Council Man who appear at the start of the play as if they are part of the audience, but who then get drawn into the action. The Common Council Man is another Collierite caricature. He makes it clear that he comes to the theatre with great reluctance because 'my Wife has dragg'd me hither amongst you'. He is, however, determined to make the best of his visit by making 'a little Reformation-work with you' and being 'a Spy upon you'. His language draws on the vocabulary of Collier and other anti-theatricals with phrases such as 'House of Vanities', 'Nurseries of Debauchery', and 'Nest of Rakes'.[75] Collier and Arthur, a later critic of the stage, often used metaphors of nurseries and schools to create the sense that the stage is incubating behaviour that they find offensive.[76] At the end of the play, Settle creates the worst possible outcome for an antitheatrical – that his daughter will marry an actor. He twists the knife by contriving for the Common Council Man to give his blessing to the marriage, following the use of disguise and a plot between the daughter, the mother, and the actor. Settle's attack is complete as he turns the concept of reformation against the reformers themselves - the Common Council Man accepts the marriage and admits that 'instead of reforming the Stage the Stage has reformed me'.[77]

In this chapter so far, we have seen how the stage and the pulpit coexisted in this period. Despite their differences, the evidence shows that there were similarities and liminalities. The Collier Controversy showed that the stage had many enemies but that the dramatists and their supporters mounted a vigorous defence. Collier did not, however, speak for the Church of England of which, as a Non-Juror, he was no longer a member. Also, he did not speak for the state. As mentioned above, the theatres were supported by many of the monarchs in this period, but that did not mean that the state was reluctant to make use of one of its potent powers – censorship.

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[74] Ibid., pp. 40-41.

[75] Elkanah Settle, *The city-ramble* (London, 1711), pp. 2, 3.

[76] Collier, *A short view*, p. 233; Jeremy Collier, *A second defence of the short view of the prophaneness and immorality of the English stage, &c. being a reply to a book, entituled, The ancient and modern stages surveyed, &c.* (London, 1700), p. 4; Bedford, *The evil and danger of stage-plays*, p. 227.

[77] Settle, *The city-ramble*, p. 71.

2.4 Censorship

Although the theatres had been re-opened by Charles II after the Restoration, this was not an unrestricted liberation of the dramatic art. Only two royal patents were issued for the creation of acting companies and the performance of plays. Plays were subject to a variety of restrictions, from enforced censorship to self-regulation, and the formal rules were changed many times through the period. Restrictions were sometimes imposed on individual plays - some were banned, some were delayed, and some were only licensed with cuts.[78] Three plays are examined in this section to provide examples of the different ways in which censorship impacted on the performance and publishing of plays.

***The Massacre of Paris*, Nathaniel Lee, 1679.**

Nathaniel Lee was a poet and playwright whose fame and fortune rose and fell to extremes during the period. He was friends with many of his contemporary dramatists and worked very closely with Dryden, including co-writing two plays.[79] This play about the St Bartholomew's Day massacre in Paris in 1572, which will be analysed in detail in section 4.1, provides an example of an outright ban. Although it was written in 1679, the play was not published, nor did it reach the stage, until after the Glorious Revolution. Dryden reported that he had heard the play was banned at the request of the French ambassador who wanted 'to save the Credit of his Country, and not to have the Memory of an Action so barbarous, reviv'd.'[80] It is possible, however, that the reason for this censorship goes deeper. Scholars have drawn attention to the weakness of the French king in this play and his inability to prevent the massacre, despite the torments suffered by his conscience. Owen has drawn a parallel between Charles II and the

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[78] An excellent overview of the different forms of restriction is provided in Matthew J. Kinservik, 'Theatrical Regulation during the Restoration Period' in Susan J. Owen (ed), *A companion to Restoration drama* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 36-52.

[79] J. M. Armistead, 'Nathaniel Lee' in *ODNB Online*, 16301.

[80] John Dryden, *The vindication, or, The parallel of the French Holy-League and the English League and Covenant turn'd into a seditious libell against the King and His Royal Highness by Thomas Hunt and the authors of the reflections upon the pretended parallel in the play called the Duke of Guise* (London, 1683), p. 41.

French king, conveniently named Charles. She makes a convincing argument that there are risks in having a monarch with an ambivalent attitude to religion, surrounded by an 'ambitious, decadent, Popish court'. Paulina Kewes goes perhaps a little too far in arguing that the play infers that Charles II 'might be complicit in the slaughter of his Protestant subjects', but I agree with her view that the play does represent 'an assault on the monarchy and its major ally, France.' Given the importance of the French alliance to Charles II, and the cash that came with it, it is probable that this lies behind the banning of the play.[81]

***The Lancashire Witches*, Thomas Shadwell, 1681.**

Thomas Shadwell was a prolific and successful playwright and poet. He had a long-running feud with John Dryden over their artistic and political differences – Dryden was a Tory, and later a Catholic, whilst Shadwell had nonconformist sympathies and was a member of the Green Ribbon Club, a radical Whig propaganda club. He succeeded Dryden as Poet Laureate after the Glorious Revolution.[82] *The Lancashire Witches* offers some interesting perspectives on the issue of censorship. The play was controversial from the start. Shadwell wrote an introduction to the published text, in which he reported that the play was attacked during a performance by 'the inconsiderable Party of Hissers', but that they were defeated by 'so numerous an assembly of the best sort of men, who stood so generously in my defence'. There were attempts to get the play banned - Shadwell's opponents reported to 'Windsor' that he had written 'Sedition and Treason, had reflected upon His Majesty, and that the Scope of the Play was against the Government of England.' Their campaign failed as 'they who had the Power, were too just for that, and let it live.'[83]

The play that was performed in 1681 was not, however, the whole play that Shadwell had written. Three entire scenes were removed and there were three other smaller cuts. These cuts were imposed by Charles Killigrew, the Master of the Revels, whose permission was needed for the performance of plays. Shadwell tells us much of the story of the play's journey from its original submission to Killigrew through to its publication:

> The Master of the Revels (who I must confess used me civilly enough) Licenc'd it at first with little alteration. But there cume such an Alarm to him, and a

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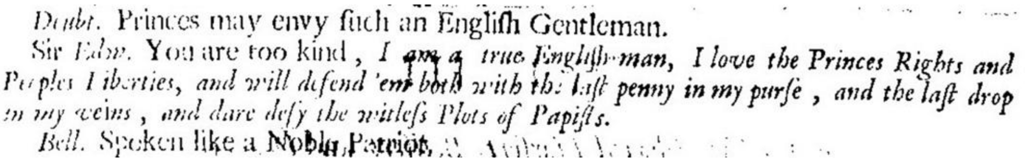
[81] Susan J. Owen, 'Interpreting the politics of Restoration drama', *The Seventeenth Century,* 8 (1993), pp. 67-97, pp. 76-79; Paulina Kewes, 'Otway, Lee and the Restoration History Play' in Owen (ed), *A companion to Restoration drama*, p. 372.

[82] Kate Bennett, 'Thomas Shadwell' in *ODNB Online*, 25195.

[83] Thomas Shadwell, *The Lancashire witches* (London, 1682), 'To the reader'.

> Report that it was full of dangerous reflections, that upon a Review, he expunged all that you see differently Printed.[84]

When the play was published by John Starkey in 1682, the 'differently Printed' sections are shown in italics, and these tell us exactly which lines and scenes were cut by Killigrew before the play was licensed for performance in 1681. An example is shown in Figure 2-1. This is an early example of censored sections being highlighted in subsequently printed texts.



Doubt. Princes may envy ſuch an Engliſh Gentleman.
Sir Edw. You are too kind, *I am a true Engliſh-man, I love the Princes Rights and Peoples Liberties, and will defend 'em both with the laſt penny in my purſe, and the laſt drop in my veins, and dare defy the witleſs Plots of Papiſts.*
Bell. Spoken like a Noble Patriot.

Figure 2-1: *Extract from Thomas Shadwell, The Lancashire Witches* (London, 1682), p. 30.

Censorship at this time was more rigorously applied to plays than to published works. The 1662 *Licensing Act* forbade, amongst other things, criticism of 'the Doctrine or Discipline of the Church of England', but the act lapsed in 1679 and such criticism was uncontrolled when Starkey published the play in 1682.[85] Starkey was, in any case, a publisher who was prepared to take risks. His shop became a venue for meetings of the Green Ribbon Club, and he fled into exile in 1682 where he sought the patronage of the Earl of Shaftesbury, who also fled in 1682.[86] The reasons for the cuts will be examined in detail in the case study in chapter 8.

This play also provides an example of self-censorship. The issue of witchcraft in the play will be explored later, but the relevance here is that Shadwell chose to portray the witches as 'real' for two reasons. As a man of the theatre, he aimed to provide entertainment that he believed his audience desired, but he also knew that revealing his scepticism of witchcraft could have resulted in accusations of atheism and more aggressive censorship. As he explained in his introduction to the printed text:

> if I had not represented them as those of real Witches, but had show'd the ignorance, fear, melancholy, malice, confederacy, and imposture that contribute to the belief of Witchcraft, the people had wanted diversion, and

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[84] Ibid., 'To the reader'.

[85] *An Act for preventing the frequent abuses in printing seditious treasonable and unlicensed bookes and pamphlets and for regulating of printing and printing presses.', in Statutes of the realm: volume 5, 1628-80, ed. John Raithby (s.l, 1819), pp. 428-435* (1662).

[86] Mark Knights, 'John Starkey and ideological networks in late seventeenth-century England', *Media History,* Vol. 11 (2005), pp. 127-45, pp. 127, 135.

> there had been another clamor against it, it would have been call'd Atheistical … and by this means the Play might have been Silenced.[87]

The Old Mode and the New, Thomas Durfey, 1703.

By the end of the seventeenth century, it had become clear that the Master of the Revels, Charles Killigrew, was not doing his job properly. The Lord Chamberlain became increasingly active and in 1697 he ordered all new plays to be submitted to him for his directions before they were performed. Also, Collier and his fellow antitheatricals were reporting transgressions to the authorities. *The Daily Courant* reported in 1704 that 'great complaints have been made to Her Majesty, of many indecent, prophane and immoral expressions.'[88] In his Epilogue to *Tamerlane* (1702), Nicholas Rowe complains of the 'sow'r Reformers in an empty Pit, / With Table Books, as at a Lecture, sit, / To take Notes, and give Evidence 'gainst Wit.'[89] In the prologue to his play *The Old Mode and the New,* Durfey complained of the censorship that was being enforced by the reformers in 'this Wit-clipping Age'. The practice of clipping coins reduced their value and, in Durfey's view, this clipping of wit had the same effect. Plays are 'Cut, scratch'd and mangled' so that 'every Play that comes corrected home, / For want of Humour, Jest, Conceit, or Satyr, / Fop Character, and such divertive Matter'. Durfey complains that the censors 'so slice the pleasant Stuff, / They hardly leave a Whim to make ye laugh', that 'merry Jokes' are 'baptiz'd' as bawdy, and oaths and words such as devil, zounds, coxcomb and cuckold are removed. Durfey laid the blame for the clipping on Collier who 'new broach'd this Trade' and then accuses him of hypocrisy by abandoning reforming 'to be better paid.'[90]

These examples show that state censorship of plays was used on occasions during this period, and that the threat of it could lead dramatists to self-censorship. These plays, and the others that were censored, were, however, a small proportion of the total output for the period. As we will see, many plays that portrayed religious characters, including conformists, in a negative way were left uncensored. This implies that the criteria for censorship were not consistent across the period, and that action was usually only taken at times of political sensitivity.

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[87] Shadwell, *Witches*, 'To the reader'.

[88] David Thomas, David Carlton and Anne Etienne, *Theatre censorship from Walpole to Wilson* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 18-19; Judith Milhous, 'Theatre companies and regulation' in Joseph Donohue, *The Cambridge history of British theatre. volume 2, 1660 to 1895* pp. 111-116; Matthew J. Kinservik, 'Theatrical Regulation during the Restoration Period', p. 45; Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume (ed), *A register of English theatrical documents 1660-1737 volume 1* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1991), pp. 324, 379.

[89] Nicholas Rowe, *Tamerlane* (London, 1702), 'Epilogue'.

[90] Durfey, *The old mode & the new*, 'Prologue'.

This chapter has shown some connections and conflicts between the stage and the pulpit, and between the stage and the state. The relationships were often strained and sometimes antagonistic. Despite this, the chapter has shown how the stage, the pulpit, and the state functioned in a condition of symbiosis and would also, at times, feed off each other. This interdependency provides the context for the thesis and underlines the importance of exploring the period through both its religion and its drama. The remaining chapters will continue this exploration through a detailed analysis of the new plays of the period.

3 NONCONFORMITY

In the chronological overview in the Introduction, we saw how and why nonconformity became an important element of the religious landscape in the period. The exclusion and persecution of nonconformists continued throughout the reign of Charles II, and this is reflected in the way that the plays portray them, with the frequent use of stereotypes of hypocritical and disreputable dissenters. The dramatists also drew on memories of the Puritans of the pre-Restoration period to portray nonconformists, by association, as dangerous political and religious radicals. This chapter opens with an analysis of the early satires after the Restoration; it then examines a range of plays written between the Popish Plot and the end of Charles II's reign. The plays engaging with nonconformity during James II's reign are then considered; and the chapter concludes with a different perspective on nonconformity - an analysis of Quaker characters in plays of the early eighteenth century, some of which are more nuanced.

It should be noted that, in the period between the early satires and the plays engaging with the Popish Plot, there were a few new plays that engaged with religious concerns. During this period, the dramatists mostly turned their attention to other issues and genres. This was not because religious issues became dormant in society in this period, but there is no evidence to explain why religion was largely ignored in the new plays. One possible reason is that the stage is a natural outlet for polemic and that religion was only of real interest to the dramatists when there was a polemical job to be done and when simpler binary choices were available – Cavalier against Puritan and Tory/Anglican against Dissenter/Whig. Streete compares the plays of the Popish Plot period with the religio-political plays of 1618-1624 and particularly the plays of Thomas Middleton. He sees both periods as a time when playwrights adopted drama as a polemical vehicle.[1] At other times, when political and religious life was more complex, engaging with religion in a non-polemical way was, perhaps, unattractive to audiences and playwrights.[2] Drama, even in comedies, thrives on conflict and is focused to the point of intensity. This makes it a dynamic weapon of attack. Most of the attacks on republicans and dissenters that are examined in this chapter appear in plays immediately after the Restoration and during the Popish Plot and Succession Crisis period. It may also be that, once the Restoration was established, audiences wanted distractions from the religious issues that continued to be fractious. This attitude may have continued for longer, but the dramatic potential provided by the Popish Plot and the Crisis was impossible for the dramatists to resist.

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[1] Adrian Streete, 'Drama' in Hiscock and Wilcox (ed), *Oxford Handbook*, p. 174.

[2] Tony Claydon and Thomas N. Corns, *Religion, culture and national community in the 1670s* (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 6-8.

3.1 Early satires

Memory is evoked in four plays from the first three years after the Restoration. The first three of these plays looked back to the later years of the Republic and contained savage satires of those who held power and influence during that period. The attacks on these characters were not always, however, based on their religious views and were more focused on their political actions. The perception of the association of Puritanism with republicanism was, however, a complex one. One element of this was the social aspect of the criticism. Most of these characters were shown as social and political upstarts and the plays focused on their abuse of power and, in particular, on their sequestration of the property of royalists.[3] By contrast, the fourth play to be examined here, *The Cheats* by John Wilson, turned its fire on the Puritan ministers who were faced in 1662 with the choice of conformity or losing their livings.

The Rump, **John Tatham, 1660;** ***The Committee,*** **Sir Robert Howard, 1662;** ***The Cutter of Coleman Street,*** **Abraham Cowley, 1661.**

One of the first plays after the Restoration was *The Rump* by John Tatham. Tatham probably fought with the Royalists in the Civil War and was best known for his pageants, one of which was staged to welcome back Charles II.[4] There is some ambiguity about exactly when *The Rump* was first performed. Susan Wiseman believes its premiere was in 1659, but any performances that year could not have been in the extant version as the published play concludes with the arrival of Philagathus (General Monck) in London in February 1660. Van Lennep believes the play was performed after the King's return, but Rachel Willie argues that, as the play does not include a panegyric about Charles II, it was probably performed before the king returned in May.[5] Whatever the precise date, this is a highly topical play as it shows the successors to the recently removed Richard Cromwell jockeying for power and financial gain. They are portrayed as hypocritical upstarts holding power in what royalists saw as a world turned upside-down. By the end of the play, the world has been turned the right way up again and the upstarts have returned to scraping a living as street vendors.

As in *The Rump*, the world is turned upside-down in *The Committee* by Sir Robert Howard. Howard was knighted for gallantry in action on the royalist side in 1644. After the Restoration, he collected an impressive number of lucrative offices and profitable grants, which soon made him a wealthy man and a prominent figure in the government. He was first returned to parliament in 1661 and served as an influential MP almost uninterruptedly until his death.[6] In the first decade after the Restoration, Howard combined his political career with that of a successful dramatist and critic.

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[3] Owen 'Restoration Drama and Politics: An Overview' in Owen (ed), *A companion to Restoration drama*, p. 126; Apama Dharwadker, 'Restoration Drama and Social Class' in ibid., p. 153.

[4] Eric Salmon, 'John Tatham' in *ODNB Online*, 26992.

[5] Susan Wiseman, *Drama and politics in the English civil war* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 187; Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. 11; Willie, *Staging the Revolution*, p. 160.

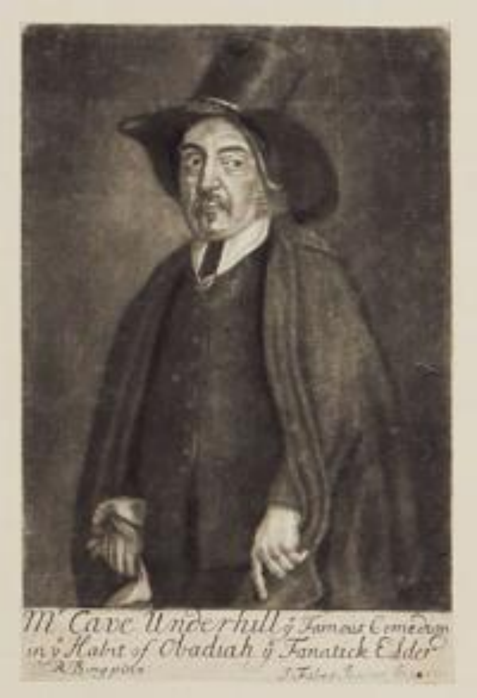
Mr Cave Underhill ye Famous Comedian
in ye Habit of Obadiah ye Fanatick Elder
R Byng pinx
J Faber

Figure 3-1: *Cave Underhill in the role of Obadiah, from The Committee*, 1712. Engraving by John Faber the Younger, after the oil painting by Robert Byng, Grosvenorprints.com.

In *The Committee*, we see the sequestration committee at its work, led by Mr Day. He is supported by Obadiah, the Chief Clerk to the Committee, who is described by another character as a 'scribble scrabble' and we can see from Figure 3-1 that he was portrayed as a gloomy Puritan.[7] The untrustworthiness of the nonconformist is shown here in the way his eyes are looking suspiciously to the side, and he is grasping his cloak as if to conceal something. The other key Puritan character is Mrs Day who does not so much support her husband as dominate him, and we discover later in the play that Mrs Day had previously been a kitchen maid in the house one of the royalist characters. It is not just politics that is turned upside-down, but also social class and gender relations.[8]

Abraham Cowley's play *The Cutter of Coleman Street* is a revised version of his earlier play *The Guardian,* which was acted for Prince Charles's entertainment in 1642. Cowley became a published poet at an early age and continued to publish poems, prose and plays throughout his life. He also worked as a secret agent for the royalists during the Republic.[9] The title of *The Cutter of Coleman Street* carries considerable significance in the light of the date of its first performance in 1661. Coleman Street in the City of London had long been a notorious centre of separatist congregations.[10] The street included the meeting house described in the epilogue of the play as ‘the Fifth-Monarch's Court in Coleman-street.’[11] It was from here that Thomas Venner led his fateful Fifth Monarchist uprising in January 1661.[12] Venner was brought back to Coleman Street to be executed when the uprising failed.[13] These events were recent history when the play was first performed. The play is set in 1658 and includes extensive mockery of the separatist congregations through the religious allegiance of the Barebottles - ‘though the Mother be a kind of Brownist, (I know not what the Devil she is indeed) yet Tabitha is o' the Fifth Monarchy Faith’.[14] This denominational ambiguity was a trope often used to mock nonconformists as religiously unstable. The mockery is taken to a higher level through the ease with which Cutter dissimulates his conversion to Fifth Monarchism. This includes some very colourful prose setting out his visions, including the use of purple dromedaries and a time ‘when the Cat of the North has o're-come the Lion of the South, and when the Mouse of the West has slain the Elephant of the East.’ Cutter also says he wants to ‘declare these things to the Congregation of the Lovely in Coleman-street.’ Tabitha Barebottle is totally convinced by all this deception.[15] This episode not only portrays a dissenter as gullible and unintelligent, it also implies that there is no substance to the beliefs of those who turn away from the Church of England.

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[6] J. P. Vander Motten, 'Sir Robert Howard' in *ODNB Online*, 13935.
[7] Robert Howard, *The committee* (London, 1665), p. 81.
[8] Hughes, *English drama*, p. 31.

Oaths

An important issue that is linked with hypocrisy in these plays is the use and abuse of oaths. Some characters struggle with oaths, whilst others treat oaths with disrespect and have no problem with the hypocrisy of swearing to oaths that they have no intention of keeping. As mentioned in the Introduction, the context for this issue is found in the religious legislation that followed the Restoration. Most of these new laws required the swearing of oaths and this posed a dilemma for many of those who would become nonconformists. David Martin Jones argues that, after the Restoration, the late Stuart regime was reluctant ‘to place any faith in the state oath, except to test the fanatical Presbyterian democrats they detested’. But, for the Presbyterians and other dissenters, this testing was no small matter as they struggled with the requirements of religious legislation.[16] Relying on the primacy of the individual conscience was a fundamental belief for many dissenters, as they saw this as obedience to God, which should take priority over obedience to an established church.[17]

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[9] Alexander Lindsay, ‘Abraham Cowley’ in *ODNB Online*, 6499.

[10] Adrian Johns, 'Coleman Street', *Huntington Library Quarterly,* 71 (2008), pp. 33-54, p. 33.

[11] Abraham Cowley, *The Cutter of Coleman Street* (London, 1663), ‘Epilogue’.

[12] Bernard Capp describes the Fifth Monarchists as ‘a political and religious sect expecting the imminent Kingdom of Christ on earth, a theocratic regime in which the saints would establish a godly discipline over the unregenerate masses and prepare for the Second Coming.’ Bernard Capp, *The fifth monarchy men* (London, 1972), p. 14.

[13] Johns, 'Coleman Street', p. 34.

[14] Cowley, *Cutter*, p. 33; Robert Browne exercised an important influence on the beginnings of Congregationalism, whose early members were often called ‘Brownists’. ‘Browne, Robert’ in *The concise Oxford dictionary of the Christian church* (Oxford, 2013).

[15] Cowley, *Cutter*, p. 39.

In *The Rump*, Lockwhite scorns oaths with a damning metaphor - ‘what are they, but Bubbles, that break with their own Emptiness.’ He dismisses the Oath of Allegiance as ‘an ill Oath, better broke then kept, and so are all Oaths in the stricter sense’. He asks Bertlam (a thinly disguised General Lambert) how he could have served his country ‘if I should have startled, or scrupl'd at Oaths, preferred honesty or Divinity before temporal interest or humane reason?’[18] Oaths feature strongly in the love plot of *The Cutter of Coleman Street*. Young Truman’s father has forced him to take an oath ‘Never to see my Mistris more, or hear her speak’. At the start of the play, he is determined to keep to his oath, even though his love for Lucia is strong: ‘sure I would never undo myself, by perjury’. Later in the play it becomes clear that Colonel Jolly has also made Lucia swear an oath never to see Truman without his consent. Young Truman eventually decides that he will marry Lucia and that his oath was a ‘rash Oath that's cancell'd in the making’.[19] Truman’s attitude reflects the belief held by many conformists that unlawful oaths should not be kept.[20]

In *The Committee* there are both political and lovers’ oaths. A central element of the plot is the wish of the Cavaliers, Blunt and Careless, to regain their sequestered estates. They are told by the Committee that this can only happen if they are willing to swear to ‘take the Covenant’ – *the Solemn League and Covenant*. In contrast to Colonel Jolly, the royalists in *The Committee* are portrayed as men of a more principled sort. They refuse the take the Covenant and hold to that principle throughout the play. They accuse the Committee men of breaking their own principle by seeking to ‘impose on other men’s consciences.’[21] *The Committee,* which was first performed in 1662, draws parallels between the problems of conscience for those not wishing to subscribe to the 1643 Solemn League and Covenant and the similar problems encountered by dissenters who could not accept the terms of the 1662 Act of Uniformity, which was also backed up by the requirement to swear oaths.[22]

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[16] David Martin Jones, *Conscience and allegiance in seventeenth century England : the political significance of oaths and engagements* (Rochester, N.Y., 1999), p. 223.

[17] De Krey, *Restoration and revolution*, p. 81

[18] John Tatham, *The rump* (London, 1660), pp. 8-9.

[19] Cowley, *Cutter*, pp. 1, 3, 19.

[20] Theodore F. Kaouk, '"Perjur'd rebel": Equivocal allegiance and Abraham Cowley's "Cutter of Coleman Street"', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700,* 33 (2009), pp. 25-46, pp. 36-37.

[21] Howard, *The committee*, p. 93.

Oaths and swearing also feature in *The Committee* in the courtship of Careless and Ruth, who appears to be the daughter of Mr and Mrs Day. Careless says that he would have her if she was not a ‘Committee-mans Daughter, and so consequently Against Monarchy’. His respect for oaths is called into question by his suggestion that Ruth swears that she is not the Days’ daughter and ‘though I know 'tis a lye, I'le be content’ and ‘do but swear Me into a pretence’. When, later in the play she swears she is not, Careless is amazed – ‘Poor kinde perjur'd pretty one, I am beholding To thee; wou'dst damn thy self for me?’.[23] It turns out, of course, that she is not the Days’ daughter and has not, therefore, committed perjury. As well as Careless’s ambiguous attitude to oaths, the play also shows us how the seriousness of struggles of conscience over the loyalty oaths can be undermined somewhat by a comic intervention. Teague overhears that Blunt and Careless are having trouble taking the Covenant and he determines to help. When visiting a bookseller, he sees a copy of the *Solemn League and Covenant* for sale. He ‘takes the covenant’ by throwing the bookseller to the ground and running off with a copy.

The background to some of these issues can be seen in the Engagement Controversy of the late 1640s and early 1650s. The *Act For Subscribing the Engagement* required all adult males to swear that ‘I Do declare and promise, That I will be true and faithful to the Commonwealth of England, as it is now Established, without a King or House of Lords’.[24] This oath effectively cancelled any previous oaths of allegiance to the crown and even the 1643 *Solemn League and Covenant* which included a promise ‘to preserve and defend the King's Majesty's person and authority’.[25] This led to an extensive pamphlet debate. One key argument was that it was acceptable to swear to the Engagement because the new Government was the de facto power and should be obeyed, even if it was a usurping power. Quentin Skinner sees obedience to a *de facto* power as a central argument in Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*.[26] The Engagement Controversy also led to a debate about the potential clash between a new oath and an earlier contradictory one.[27] As we will see in section 5.2, this was a critical issue for the Non-Jurors. In 1649, Anthony Ascham argued that 'tacit conditions and accidents of the world' removed the obligation to keep to an earlier oath.[28] The contrary argument was that an oath was not just a promise to a secular power but 'confirmed a Solemn Vow and Promise made to God' and breaking it would be perjury.[29] Those who sought to persuade others to swear to the Engagement were seen as 'resolving the scruples of such who cannot swallow down this cammel of perjury as easily as themselves'.[30] Thomas Paget argued, however, that swearing to the Engagement was acceptable because, as with other such oaths, the primary concern was 'the just safety and preservation of the Common-wealth of England'.[31]

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[22] Backscheider, *Spectacular politics*, p. 63.

[23] Howard, *The committee*, pp. 109, 126.

[24] *An Act For subscribing the engagement* (1650).

[25] Anonymous, *A solemn league and covenant for reformation, and defence of religion, the honour and happinesse of the king, and the peace and safety of the three kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (London, 1643), p. 6.

[26] Quentin Skinner ‘Conquest and consent’ in G. E. Aylmer, *The Interregnum : the quest for settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972), p. 81.

[27] Edward Vallance, 'Oaths, casuistry, and equivocation: Anglican responses to the engagement controversy', *The Historical Journal,* 44 (2001), pp. 59-77, p. 59.

Navigating these complex pathways could be very challenging for people, particularly those with tender consciences. Casuistic arguments were often used to find a solution, or at least a compromise. These arguments included not keeping an unlawful or evil oath and using ambiguities in the wording of oaths to equivocate.[32] Although casuistry had been a prominent feature of moral reasoning for a century, it had become subject to attack in some quarters, most notably from Pascal in his *Provincial Letters* in 1656/7. As Barbara Warnick has observed, casuistry had allowed so many caveats and exclusions that it was seen by many that 'the force of moral law was thoroughly dissipated.'[33] Casuistry had often been associated with Jesuitical reasoning, but some historians have identified an important strain of casuistry in Puritan and nonconformist writing.[34] Susan Staves reports that royalist satirists linked the two and saw 'villainous puritans invariably justifying the most transparent perjuries with Jesuitical casuistry'.[35] This negative attitude to casuistry is reflected in the plays. Lockwhite in *The Rump* argues that 'He that will live in this world, must be endowed with these three rare Qualities; Dissimulation, Equivocation, and Mental reservation.'[36] In *The Cutter of Coleman Street*, the lovers solve their problem by hatching a plan 'to save their Oathes like cunning Casuists' by marrying in the dark and in silence.[37] There are two clerics in these plays, and they are both severely satirized for their behaviour and their acceptance or advocacy of casuistry. In *The*

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[28] Antony Ascham, *The bounds & bonds of publique obedience* (London, 1649), p. 42.

[29] Theophilus Timorcus, *The covenanters plea* (London, 1661), p. 71.

[30] Anonymous, *A pack of old Puritans* (London, 1650), 'To the Christian Reader'.

[31] Thomas Paget, *A faithfull and conscientious account for subscribing the engagement* (London, 1650), p. 21.

[32] Vallance, 'Oaths, casuistry, and equivocation', p. 61.

[33] Barbara Warnick, 'The abuse of casuistry: A history of moral reasoning by Albert R. Jonsen, Stephen Toulmin', *Philosophy & Rhetoric,* 24 (1991), pp. 76-80, p. 78.

[34] Keith Thomas, 'Cases of conscience in 17th century England' in J. S. Morrill, Paul Slack, D. R. Woolf and G. E. Aylmer, *Public duty and private conscience in seventeenth-century England : essays presented to G.E. Aylmer* (Oxford, 1993), p. 43; Vallance, 'Oaths, casuistry, and equivocation', p. 62.

[35] Susan Staves, *Players' scepters : fictions of authority in the Restoration* (Lincoln, 1979), pp. 192, 203.

[36] Tatham, *The rump*, p. 9.

[37] Cowley, *Cutter*, p. 31.

Cutter of Coleman Street, Soaker is described as ‘a fuddling little Deacon’ and is usually to be found in the buttery. He agrees to marry the silent lovers in the dark and agrees that they should give their consent by using ‘reverences and giving their hands’ rather than breaking their oath by speaking to each other.[38] The other casuistical cleric is to be found in the fourth play of this section.

***The Cheats*, John Wilson, 1663.**

Criticism of casuistry reached its apogee in this play. Wilson was both a playwright and a lawyer. He held positions during the Republic, although his later works show a critical attitude to the Civil War and Cromwell's regime. He later became a propagandist for James II.[39] In *The Cheats* the nonconformist minister Scruple sells his religious adherence to the highest bidder (interestingly the winners are a group of dissenters and not the Church of England). The sanctimonious nature of this character can be seen in the portrait of the actor John Lacy in three of his most famous roles, painted for Charles II - see Figure 3-2 (the character on the right is Scruple). The large hands are very prominent and perhaps he is wringing them in his casuistic torment. This portrait also demonstrates the importance and effectiveness of disguise for a successful and versatile actor. In the play Scruple often calls on casuistry to support his disreputable arguments and flawed behaviour. When calling for a ‘great tankard’ he argues that ‘The Casuists, speak comfortably in this point---A man may eat, and drink abundantly, without any necessity, but merely for his pleasure’. He also shows a disrespect for marriage when he calls on the casuists to justify adultery:

> If a Woman, great with Child, long for another man, besides her Husband, and this Husband will not give consent; In this case we say, (and so we generally agree) that she may follow her natural inclination; Provided alwayes, she have no intention of sin, but only to satisfie her longing.

and abortion:

> If a young woman, of a godly Parentage, do fall into a holy Fornication (not out of Lust, but Love) and thereupon prove with Child; In such case we say, That it may be lawful to procure Abortion, provided alwayes, it be not done, with an intention of Murder, but only to save Life, or Reputation.[40]

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[38] Ibid., ‘The Persons’, p. 31.

[39] Kathleen Menzie Lesko, ‘John Wilson’ in *ODNB Online*, 29663.

[40] John Wilson, *The cheats* (London, 1664), pp. 15, 23.

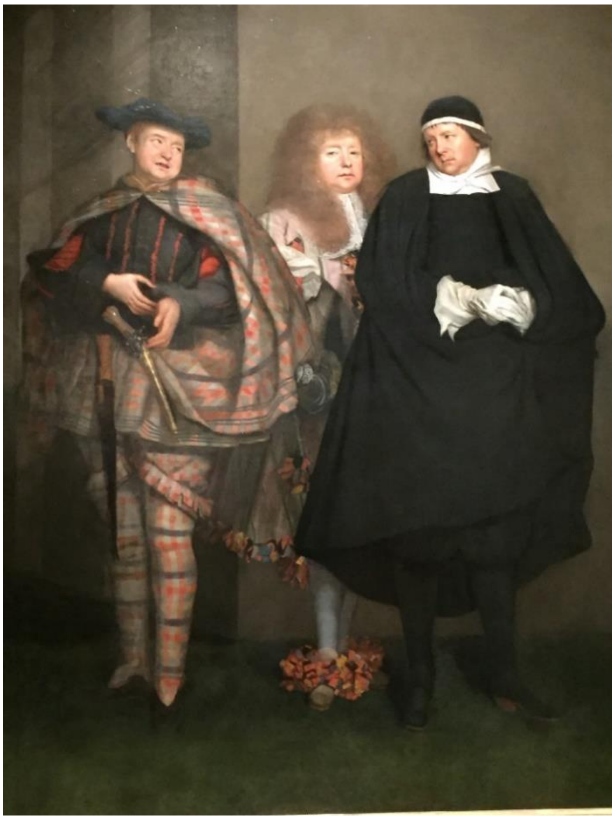

Figure 3-2: *John Lacy as Scruple in The Cheats (right)*, 1668-70.
Portrait by John Michael Wright, Royal Collection Trust, RCIN 402803.

Scruple’s most egregious display of casuistry relates to the question faced by all clergy at the time - whether or not to conform to the Church of England, following the 1662 *Act of Uniformity*. The act was enforced just a few months before the play was first performed, making this a very topical issue. Despite the misery felt by many of the ejected clergy, some conformists took an unsympathetic view. They saw struggles of conscience as nothing but a mask that would lead to what Thomas Ashenden would later call ‘a monstrous medley of mischiefs’.[41] This unsympathetic attitude is reflected in the play - when Scruple is offered a £300 living if he will conform, we watch him alone on stage as he calls on casuistry, equivocation, and every other possible methodology to help him to justify his conformity and his abandonment of his ‘brethren’. He also needs to negotiate his way around the issue of oaths. The monologue is long, rambling and highly entertaining and is described by Hughes as ‘linguistic chaos’.[42] He reaches the climax of the speech with a rapturous conclusion:

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[41] Thomas Ashenden, *No penalty, no peace* (London, 1682), p. 19.
[42] Hughes, *English drama*, p. 56.

> I have found an Expedient (and yet not mine, but our Brethrens still) The Swearer is not bound to the meaning of the Prescriber of the Oath, or his own meaning---How then?---Sweetly:---To the reality of the thing sworn:---I think the hair is split:---But who shall be Judge of that?---Of that hereafter:---In the mean time--- Here is 300 l. a year, and a goodly house upon't:---I will Conform, Reform, Transform, Perform, Deform, Inform, any Form: ---Form---Form--- 'Tis but one syllable, and has no very ill sound---It may be swallowed.[43]

The word 'form' becomes the central image in this virtuoso display of formlessness. Having made this enormous effort to arrive at the decision to conform, he is then offered more money to stay with his 'brethren', which he accepts. This satirical portrayal of a ridiculous and hypocritical nonconformist minister reflected the intolerant attitude of many conformists. In the next section, later examples of this trope will be examined.

The attitude of these four plays to religion, and particularly oaths, is almost entirely negative. With the exception of Blunt and Careless, who keep to their oaths (although even Careless's attitude to oaths in general is questionable), every other oath is either avoided, broken, or criticised; the behaviour of the two clerics in the plays is seen as reprehensible; and all the religiously committed characters are heavily satirized.

3.2 The 'Hypocritical Fanatick', 1678-1683

The flawed nonconformist returned to the stage in 1678, after a long absence. This section will begin with a consideration of two plays by Aphra Behn - *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678) and *The Feigned Curtizans* (1679). In the wake of the Popish Plot, the dramatists then turned their attacks to the Catholics (see section 4.1). By the end of 1681 the Tory reaction was well underway, and attention turned back to the nonconformists. The next three plays to be examined will show us a range of hypocritical dissenters in Behn's *The Roundheads*, the anonymous *Mr Turbulent*, and Durfey's *The Royalist*. The premieres of these three plays were probably given within a few weeks of each other in December 1681 and January 1682.[44] *The Roundheads* and *The Royalist* are set during the Republic and *Mr Turbulent* is populated by characters who have not accepted the new regime – they continually talk of the Commonwealth and are nostalgic for 'the good times of the Rump'. As well as looking back to the Republic, these plays also draw on the early satires for inspiration and even, in the case of *The Roundheads*, for plot and dialogue.[45]

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[43] Wilson, *The cheats*, p. 73.

[44] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, pp. 303-305.

Two plays by Aphra Behn: *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678) and *The Feigned Curtizans* (1679).

Aphra Behn was a highly prolific writer of poems, prose, plays and translations. She was probably the first English woman to earn a living as a writer and, in 1929, Virginia Woolf declared that Behn had earned women 'the right to speak their minds'. She was a committed Royalist, conformist, and Tory, and carried out intelligence work on behalf of Charles II before and after the Restoration. She was a strong supporter of James II and died soon after the Glorious Revolution. She wrote in many literary forms and her prose fictional work *Oroonoko* was adapted for the stage by Thomas Southerne.[46]

Sir Patient Fancy is Behn's reworking of Moliere's *Le Malade Imaginaire*. The title character, like Argan in Moliere's play, is an extreme hypochondriac. Behn couldn't resist using the ridiculous behaviour of this character to attack religious dissent and adopted the trope of the medicalisation of dissent by making him a committed nonconformist. Sir Patient condemns the Church of England through association with Catholicism: 'I profess we ne're had good daies since these Canonicall Fopperies came up again, meer Popish tricks'. He believes that 'there's not a pin to chuse' between a Papist and a 'Church of England Man'. Linking an object of aversion with Catholicism was a common trope of the period and, later in this section, we will see how conformists sought to undermine dissent by linking it with Catholicism. But Sir Patient is not the only nonconformist under attack in this play. He has married a young wife who despises his dissenting friends as: 'a Herd of snivelling grinning Hypocrites that call themselves the teaching Saints, who under pretence of securing me to the number of their Flock, do so sneer upon me, pat my Breasts and cry, fy, fy upon this fashion of tempting Nakedness.' Once again, nonconformity is attacked as hypocritical. This 'herd' uses pretence to indulge lascivious desires. Gluttony is added to the charge sheet when we later learn that the person due to lead the prayers is incapable of doing so because he has 'over-eaten himself at Breakfast'.[47] His name is Gogle, a name that we will meet again in Behn's *The Roundheads.*

As we will see in section 5.1, the conformist Lady Fancy is also portrayed in a negative light and treats Sir Patient badly. This is one of the reasons that, by the end of the play, we find him a sympathetic character. It would not suit Behn's vision of the world to have a sympathetic dissenter left standing at the play's resolution so, as well as being cured of his hypochondria,

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[45] Owen, 'Restoration Drama and Politics: An Overview', p. 132; Hughes, *English drama*, p. 231.
[46] Janet Todd, 'Aphra Behn' in *ODNB Online*, 1961.
[47] Aphra Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy* (London, 1678), pp. 14-15, 26, 61, 72.

Sir Patient is also cured of his nonconformity. He admits that he is ‘so chang'd from what I was, that I think I cou'd even approve of Monarchy and Church Discipline’ and concludes the play by saying that he will ‘turn Spark, they live the merriest lives — keep some City Mistress, go to Court, and hate all Conventicles.’[48] The flipside of the medicalisation of dissent is the good health of conformity.

Behn’s attack on the flawed nonconformist continued with *The Feigned Curtizans*. Timothy Tickletext describes himself as ‘principal holder forth of the Covent Garden Conventicle, Chaplain of Buffoon-Hall in the County of Kent’. He takes hypocrisy and dissembling to a new level - 'Certo ‘tis a wonderfull pleasure to deceive the World’. At his first appearance, we see him preening himself for the ladies. In contrast to the comedies in which lovers disguise themselves as clerics, Tickletext adopts an antithetical disguise when he sets off ‘wenching’. He sees his clerical habit as a restriction and, once it is cast off and he is ‘disguised’ as a member of the laity, he is free to follow his sexual urges.[49]

***The Roundheads*, Aphra Behn, 1681.**

This play is Behn’s reworking of Tatham’s *The Rump.* When *The Rump* was first performed, it was dealing with current affairs. It looked back to the end of the Republic but did so only months after its demise, and probably before the king returned. *The Roundheads* gives us a much longer view from over twenty years after the events it portrays. But it is also addressing current affairs of a different kind. The play was probably first performed in December 1681 at the end of a turbulent year that had seen a shift of power.[50] Once again, those who opposed the ‘Cavaliers’ had been defeated. In 1660 it was the republican government and in 1681 it was the Whigs. Portraying the Whigs as the political descendants of regicidal republicans was a common trope and Behn takes it up.

The most significant change that Behn makes to Tatham’s play, and the most relevant here, is the engagement with religious issues in a way that was less emphatic in *The Rump.* The accusations of hypocrisy start early in the play, as the leading republicans take pride in their ability to dissimulate and equivocate, which is so effective that they can ‘out-do the Jesuits’, once again coupling dissent with Catholicism. The link between hypocrisy and dissimulation can be seen when Lord Desborough says he has lost the ability to dissimulate. The Puritan Gogle says he has lost a great virtue and pleads ‘let us not lose the Cause for Dissimulation and Hypocrisie, those two main Engines that have carry'd on the great Work.’ General Lambert boasts to his wife that he believes he has secured the highest office through bribery, promises of preferment and ‘Hypocrisie and Pretence of Religion’.[51] Scruple in *The Cheats* showed us religious flexibility adopted for financial gain, and here it is for the acquisition of power.

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[48] Ibid., pp. 89, 91.

[49] Aphra Behn, *The feign'd curtizans* (London, 1679), p. 34.

[50] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. 303.

The hypocrisy and lasciviousness of Gogle is clear from his first appearance. Within moments of being left alone on stage with Lady Desborough, he is fondling her breasts. When she rejects his advances, he defends himself by explaining that many ‘Ladies of high Degree in the Commonwealth’ take up the opportunity of sexual encounters offered by clerics without risk of public exposure. She throws many insults at him, one of which is to call him ‘the very Pope of Presbytery’, once again reflecting the trope that dissenters were Jesuits in disguise.[52] In an early Restoration play, *The Pragmatical Jesuit New-Leavened* (1665?) by Richard Carpenter, the character Aristotle calls two other characters a ‘Puritanical Jesuit’ and a ‘Jesuitical Puritan’ and accuses them of being ‘both Enthusiasm’d with a singular spirit’.[53]

This association is strikingly represented in a satirical print of 1685 that shows Titus Oates as a ‘Popish Whigg’. The lighter side of the portrait projects the image of a Protestant, while the darker side shows a Jesuit cloak in the shadows. The text under the image describes him as ‘A Zealous, Whiggish Jesuit’ (see Figure 3-3).

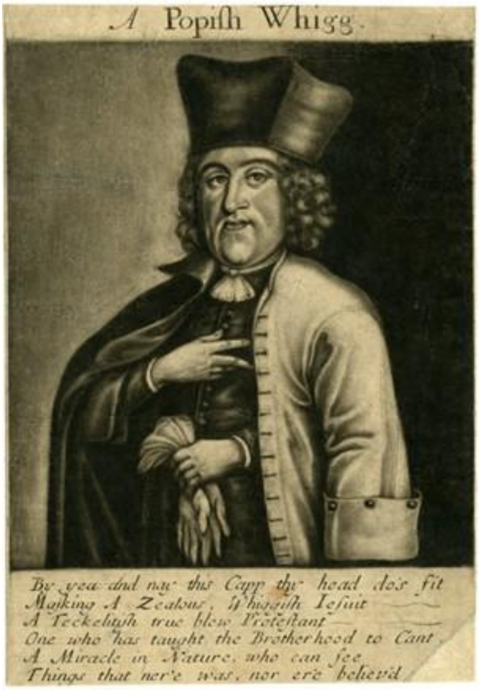
A Popiſh Whigg.
By yea and nay this Capp thy head do's fit
Making A Zealous, Whiggish Jeſuit
A Teckelitish true blew Protestant
One who has taught the Brotherhood to Cant
A Miracle in Nature, who can see
Things that ner'e was, nor ere believ'd

Figure 3-3: *Titus Oates as A Popish Whigg*, c1683. Print anonymous, BM, 1864,0813.163.

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[51] Behn, *The Roundheads*, pp. 8, 11, 35.
[52] Ibid., p. 29.
[53] Richard Carpenter, *The pragmatical Jesuit new-leven'd* (London, 1665), p. 34.

Mr Turbulent, Anonymous, 1682.

One of the adjectives often used by conformists to attack both nonconformists and Catholics was 'turbulent' and, in 1682, William Saywell published a book in which he adopted the trope of associating the two groups. He placed the responsibility for the conflicts within Christianity on 'the zealous Defenders of the Pope's usurpt Jurisdiction over all Christians, and the turbulent Fanaticks or Anti-Episcopal Party, that have thus filled Christendom with Blood and Confusion.'[54] In the same year that Saywell's book was published, this anonymous play was written - adopting the term 'turbulent' for its title and the name of its central character. In its first scene, Mr Turbulent, his family, and his followers are condemned for their religion by Fairlove, who is love with Turbulent's niece and is a 'gentleman of sense and understanding'. In Fairlove's view, Turbulent is followed by a 'gang … of Anabaptists, Vitioneers, Hypocrites, Cheats and Fools of all sorts' and Turbulent's daughter is 'an impertinent, and unmannerly Quaker'. Fairlove sees Turbulent as a man of 'hypocritical sanctity' who rails against 'the Times, the Court, the King, the Church, the Government and almost anything that stands in his way'. Turbulent and his friends are nostalgic for the old days when they could rail without fear – 'it is a great tribulation to have ones zeal quenched'. He bewails 'The Villanies, the Whoredoms, the Fornications, the Adulteries, the Pride, Folly, and Vain-glory of this Age.'[55]

Although the play is clearly set after the Restoration, the anonymous playwright draws on the early satires for many elements of his play. Hughes argues that '*Mr. Turbulent* in a single breath imitated *The Committee, Cutter of Coleman-Street*, and *The Cheats*', but the closest religious parallels are with *The Cutter of Coleman Street*.[56] Both plays include a deception where the nonconformists are easily duped into believing that another character is a follower of their religion. Whereas Cutter pretends he has converted to Fifth Monarchism, Hangby, who is described as 'a cheat', is introduced to Mr Turbulent as Peregrine Pricket, a Muggletonian.[57] The daughters in both plays belong to radical sects - Tabitha Barebottle is a Fifth Monarchist and Priscilla Turbulent is a Quaker. There is an ambiguity about the specific religion of the wives in both plays, which reflects the idea that nonconformity was, in its very nature, unstable. Cutter observes that Mrs Barebottle 'be a kind of Brownist, (I know not what the Devil she is indeed)' and Mrs Turbulent 'has walk'd through all religions'.[58] This trope of lumping all dissenters together indiscriminately is also seen in *The Royalist* – 'he has been a Quaker, Papist, Independant, Muggletonian, Fifth-Monarchy-man, and all the Sects under the Sun, and yet never fixt to any of 'em''.[59]

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[54] William Saywell, *Evangelical and Catholick unity, maintained in the Church of England* (London, 1682), p. 340.

[55] Anonymous, *Mr Turbulent* (London, 1682), 'Dramatis Personae', pp. 4-5, 24, 47. The pagination is awry in Act 2 in this edition.

[56] Hughes, *English drama*, p. 231.

[57] Anonymous, *Mr Turbulent*, 'Dramatis Personae', pp. 45-46; 'The Muggletonians were a small sect founded in 1652 by John Reeve and his cousin Ludowicke Muggleton. They denied the doctrine of the Trinity and held that during the period of the Incarnation the government of heaven was left to Elijah'. 'Muggletonians' in *CODCC*.

At the end of *The Rump,* the 'proper' place for the social upstarts was back on the street as street vendors. In *Mr Turbulent*, a worse fate awaits them as they are sent to Bethlem Royal Hospital, a psychiatric hospital known colloquially as Bedlam. We are shown some inmates of Bedlam, and this provides another opportunity to attack the Fifth Monarchists. One inmate enters and delivers a short speech about the downfall of 'the Whore of Babylon'. The Keeper explains that he is a Fifth Monarchist preacher and that he 'employs himself this way all day long', a point that is emphasised by the start of the inmate's speech when he says that this is his 'nine and fortieth point'. We are invited to imagine him going from room to room, making a new point in every room.[60] The inclusion of this brief episode encourages the audience or reader to look back in time - both to the Republic when the Fifth Monarchists were a prominent feature of the religious landscape, and also to the early Restoration period when their uprising played a key role in the events that led to the persecution of nonconformists. This retrospection is intended to emphasise current dangers by drawing a direct line of descent between the Whigs of 1682 and their radical and violent predecessors. This episode is also another example of the medicalisation of nonconformity – to persevere with such views for twenty years means that the only 'proper' place for such people is amongst the insane. Some years later John Tutchin in *The Observator* argued for the establishment of 'The Project of a Religious Bedlam' for the care of 'Religious Mad-men'.[61]

***The Royalist*, Thomas Durfey, 1682.**

Memory of the Republic is also seen in this play, which is set just before the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658. In his Preface, Durfey emphasises the importance of memory - he explicitly asks the reader to 'look on the first Act of this Play as a Memento of past, or as a Caveat of future Mischiefs and Diabolical Practices.' He also advocates cancelling the Act of Oblivion because of 'new repeated Associations and Treasons'.[62] The royalist of the title is Sir Charles Kinglove who not only has a highly appropriate name for a royalist, but also has impeccable royalist credentials. These are enhanced by the memory of his fighting with Charles II at the battle of Worcester in 1651 and his ownership of the tree in which Charles famously hid after the battle. At the start of the play Kinglove is told that his estate has been sequestered by Sir Oliver Oldcut, Chairman to the Committee of Sequestrations, who benefits personally from the sequestration. This parallel with *The Committee* does not, however extend to Oldcut's wife, who asks him whether he has a conscience about taking advantage of Kinglove's loss. As Hughes observes, the Puritan women in *The Royalist* are well intentioned but subordinate: 'there is no Mrs Day to combine social with sexual insubordination.'[63] Oldcut's brazen and patronising response condemns him – 'Conscience! whiew---Ah Fool! wilt never be wiser? Conscience! when, didst thou ever know a thriving States-man have a Conscience? Never, Turtle! never, Crooked-rib, never!'[64]

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[58] Cowley, *Cutter*, p. 33; Anonymous, *Mr Turbulent*, p. 5.

[59] Durfey, *The royalist*, p. 15; The Independents was another name for the Congregationalists, a 'form of Church polity which rests on the independence and autonomy of each local Church'. 'Congregationalism' in *CODCC*.

[60] Anonymous, *Mr Turbulent*, p. 75.

[61] John Tutchin, *The Observator,* 23-26 July 1707, p. 1.

[62] Durfey, *The royalist*, 'The preface'.

A lack of conscience can also be seen in the character of Captain Jonas, who is described as 'A Seditious Rascal that disturbs the People with News and Lyes, to Promote his own Interest'. He tries to persuade Kinglove to murder Oldcut and is overheard by Philipa. He knows he has been overhead and so, to protect his own position, he decides to invent a plot to discredit Kinglove and Philipa. The issue of oaths appears again as Jonas plans 'to decoy two or three easie Fools to swear some notorious Crimes against them; by that means to make 'em not be believ'd.' He asks Copyhold and Slouch, two of Kinglove's tenants, if they will swear to something and they ask whether it is true or false. He dismisses the question: 'Oh fye, what a question is that in this Age! True or false? why, 'tis all one, 'tis all one, man. If true, there's the more Honour; if false, there's the more Money'. When the case is investigated, the parallels with the Popish Plot become more explicit. Jonas embellishes the fictitious plot and produces a list of the conspirators. One of the Committee states that 'This Plot was hatcht in Rome, I warrant you' and Oldcut reaches even further back in history and declares this as 'a second Powder-Plot' – reflecting the attitude that all plots are Popish, even when they are not.[65]

The trope of the association of dissenters and Catholics is also seen here. In the Preface, Durfey wrote: 'I am sure your Papist and Phanatick have an entire Union and agree to a hair'. In the play itself, Jonas uses disguise to test the religious loyalties of Kinglove. He pretends to be a Jesuit and 'reveals' that he has infiltrated dissenting groups and is at home there because they are the brethren and 'intimate Bosome friends' of the Jesuits – 'Your Quaker is the Anvil on which we forge our designs, and the Phanatick the person that uses them.'[66] Once again we see denominational ambiguity being used to reflect the trope that dissenters are papists in masquerade, a trope made crystal clear in a visual satire of 1680 (see figure 3-4), which includes some theatre elements such as the curtain and the side boxes – from one of which we see the pope watching over a nonconformist committee.

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[63] Hughes, *English drama*, p. 231.
[64] Durfey, *The royalist*, p. 14.
[65] Ibid., 'Actors Names', pp. 28-29, 47.
[66] Ibid., 'The preface', p. 22.

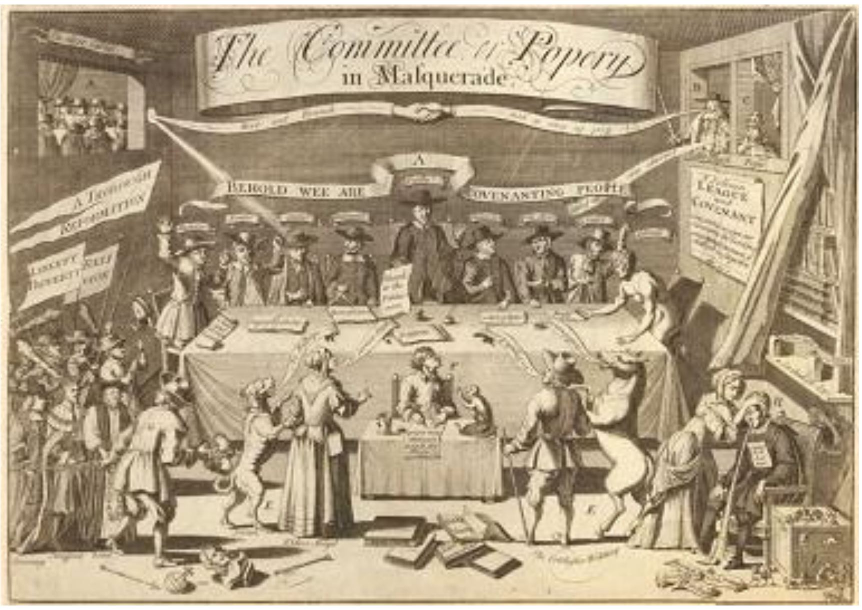

Figure 3-4: *The Committee, or Popery in Masquerade*, 1680. BM, 1870,0514.2954.

City Politiques, John Crowne, 1683.

In his Prologue to this play, Crowne picks up the same trope, and also Durfey's metaphor – 'Seize on that Ware, by which some Men by stealth / Promote the Traffick of a Common-Wealth / Ware, some believe by Priests and Jesuits Spun, / They Weave the Cloath, FANATICKS put it on.'[67] *City Politiques* was first licenced in June 1682, but then banned a few days later. Permission to perform the play was finally given in December and the premiere took place on 19th January 1683.[68] Roger Morrice reported that 'Divers persons of great quality were brought upon the Stage … Dr. Oates was also personated, and he and the Plott Ridiculed.' The play received royal attention when the king and the court attended the fourth performance.[69] The performance was a lively affair and 'there were mighty clappings among the people of both partyes in Expressing either their satisfaction or displeasure'.[70] The play's topicality would have been enhanced by the death of the Earl of Shaftesbury in Holland a week before the premiere.

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[67] John Crowne, *City politiques* (London, 1683), 'Prologue'.

[68] Milhous and Hume (ed), *A register of English theatrical documents 1660-1737 volume 1*, pp. 228, 229, 234, 236.

[69] John Spurr (ed), *The entring book of Roger Morrice: The reign of Charles II, 1677-1685* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 353.

[70] Quoted in Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. 318.

Crowne’s primary targets in the play were the Whigs and the dissenters, but few escape the play’s savage satire. Parallels with the Crisis period are reflected in a plethora of fictitious plots. The Podesta and his followers are portrayed as Whigs who invent plots by the clergy and start rumours of an imminent French invasion. The central character, Florio, crafts his own plot invention so that he can get time alone with the object of his love, Rosaura, the wife of the Podesta. The play also includes a version of the Meal Tub Plot as the ‘Tory rogues … have drawn up one among themselves, in imitation of ours, cast one in our own Mold, taken our own words, and discharge 'em upon us.’[71]

Dissembling religion is once again on show from the start. Florio has abandoned his libertine lifestyle to ‘Pray, hear Sermons, live soberly, abstain from Wine, Women, and Wits’ in order to pursue Rosaura. But he finds his conversion is ‘a dismal Purgatory’ and to his old friends he is a ‘damn'd confounded Hypocrite’. The medicalisation of dissent is used by Florio - as well as dissembling religion, he also dissembles illness and, as with Sir Patient Fancy, he is ‘cured’ of both by the end of the play. Titus Oates is satirized in the character of Dr Sanchy and is portrayed as a religious hypocrite - ‘Hang conscience …. Hang prayers! this is a thing of forty times the consequence, we may pray at any time, or if we never pray at all, 'tis no great matter’.[72]

The deceit and hypocrisy surrounding false oaths is prominent in this play. The Podesta is exposed as a hypocrite when he is told by a ‘Spanyard o' Quality’ – Florio’s servant in disguise – that the Viceroy will appoint him as Lord Treasurer if he sacrifices Dr Sanchy, the Bricklayer, and Florio.[73] The Podesta says he would sacrifice his own father and swear any oath to get the job. This is an attack on those who swore oaths but were seen by conformists as hypocrites who betrayed their religious principles to secure public positions, as we saw earlier in *The Roundheads*.

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The period of the Popish Plot and the Succession Crisis was highly dramatic, both on the stage and in the world of religion and politics. We will see in section 4.1 how the intensity of anti-Catholicism was reflected in the new plays immediately following the emergence of the Plot. In this section we have explored plays written before the Plot and after the Tory reaction turned attention back to the dissenters in 1681. Although there is a clear temporal division between these two groups of plays, similar tropes were adopted by the dramatists. The trope of deceptive, immoral hypocrites will also be seen in the anti-Catholic plays, and clerical characters throughout this period are subjected to contempt, whether dissenting or Catholic.

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[71] Crowne, *City politiques*, p. 49.

[72] Ibid., pp. 2-3, 19.

[73] Ibid., p. 67.

We have also seen how the dramatists drew on the prevalent antagonism to Catholicism to portray nonconformists as papists in masquerade. These tropes will continue into the plays of the reign of James II.

3.3 Nonconformists in the plays of the reign of James II

Despite the attempts by James II to get support from nonconformists for his religious policies, the new plays of his reign that engaged with religious issues continued with the themes of hypocrisy and the disreputable nonconformist. The dramatists knew it would not be advisable to turn their fire on the Catholics now that James was on the throne and, given the uncertainties of the position of dissenters under the new regime, it is perhaps unsurprising that they stuck with the tropes of the previous few years.

***Sir Courtly Nice*, John Crowne, 1685.**

This play was in its final rehearsals when, on 6th February 1685, Charles II died. The theatres were closed soon afterwards, and the play was not performed until May. Crowne wrote the play at the request of the king, who had given him a copy of a Spanish play that Crowne used as his source. As mentioned in the Introduction, Crowne's political and religious views depended on the way the wind was blowing or, as Beth Neman more charitably expresses it, his 'fervour was equally strong for whatever religion or policy was ascendant.' This flexibility may have been financially driven as he was not a wealthy man and depended on his playwrighting to make a living. He wrote at least twenty plays, six of which are referenced in this thesis, over a thirty-year period.[74]

The main plot of *City Politiques* contains the usual cocktail of sex, farce, and deception, but the religious divisions of the time are emphasised by two extraordinary characters – one conformist and one nonconformist. In the cast list they are described as 'Hothead. A cholerick Zealot against Fanaticks' and 'Testimony. A Canting Hypocritical Fanatick.' They usually appear on stage together and are continuously bickering, hurling accusations at each other, and threatening violence. The tone of their discourse reflects the polemical nature of the pamphlets of the period, as they both attempt to paint the other as an extremist. Testimony accuses Hothead of being a papist and, in return, he is accused of being a fanatic. The dispute at the time about whether popery or dissent was the greatest danger to the state is also reflected in their squabbles. When Lord Belguard asks who is knocking at the door, Hothead says 'Forty One is coming in' and Testimony says 'Popery, I'm sure is coming in.' At the end of the play, Hothead beats and kicks Testimony who responds with ‘Persecution – Persecution – Papist – do – kick the Godly, kick the Protestants out o' Kingdom – do Papist – I see what you wou'd be at’. The issue of oaths makes a brief appearance - Hothead threatens to ‘cram the Oaths of Allegiance, and Supremacy’ into Testimony, who is adamant that ‘if you ask me Ten thousand times, I will not take the Oaths’.[75]

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[74] Beth S. Neman, 'John Crowne', *ODNB Online,* 6832.

Although they mostly appear as bickering identical twins, Testimony is, as usual for the dissenter, portrayed as lascivious and, therefore, a hypocrite. When Farewel pretends to suggest a minor gang-bang, Testimony responds with enthusiasm:

> Farewel: Come in, come in honest old Fornicator, though the girle be mine, when I have had my collation, if she'l consent, faith, thou shalt have a bit; I love a Wenching Rogue i'my heart.
> Testimony: Oh! dear Sir, your very humble servant, and truly I am a kind of a wag. I love a pretty bit sometimes.

Testimony may appear more disreputable than Hothead but, by linking these two characters so closely, the play does not spare the conformist. Although they detest each other, they both feed off the energy of their antagonism. As Leonora says, ‘Are not these a ridiculous Couple?’[76]

Sir Courtly Nice was the final new play written during Charles II’s reign and paints a picture of the period that, although a simplistic caricature, contains an element of truth – a main plot of sexual antics and deception, with a sub-plot of polemical religious conflict. Bearing in mind that Crowne had previously been something of a scourge of the dissenters, his rebalancing of the religious contest in *Sir Courtly Nice* may be a sign of the change in attitudes to religious toleration and persecution that was starting to emerge.

The Devil of a Wife, Thomas Jevon, 1686.

After the Restoration, religious persecution was primarily a weapon of the conformists. In this play, Thomas Jevon shows that the dissenters could themselves be seen as intolerant. Jevon was a busy actor, primarily in comic roles. *The Devil of a Wife* is his only play and there is some ambiguity about whether he was its sole author.[77] The main plot is the transformation of Lady Lovemore, who is described by Jevon as ‘A Proud Phanatick, always canting and brawling. A Perpetual Fixen and a Shrew’. Her husband, Sir Richard, wants to be rid of her and she is hated by all her servants. The Butler is concerned – 'my poor Master, this devilish Termagant Scolding Religious Woman will be the death of him'. Her only support comes from her chaplain Noddy, 'A Hypocritical Phanatick Parson, loves to eat and cant'. His gluttony is prodigious – he orders two chickens, some bacon and a pie, together with 'a Bottle of Sack, a Bottle of Ale and a Bottle of March Beer' just to get him through till supper time. The Cook describes him as a 'sweet tooth'd Lickerish Hypocrite who is always eating'. There is also an insinuation that he never gained orders but 'ordain'd himself by virtue of outward Grace and inward Knavery'.[78]

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[75] John Crowne, *Sir Courtly Nice* (London, 1685), ‘To his Grace the Duke of Ormond’, ‘The Names of the Persons’, pp. 26, 35-36, 59.
[76] Ibid., pp. 4, 55.
[77] John C. Ross, ‘Thomas Jevon’ in *ODNB Online*, 14807.

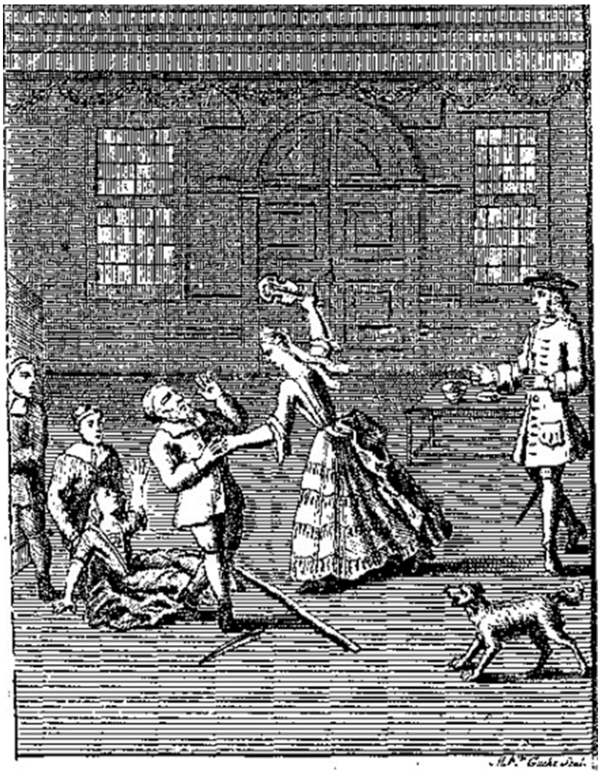

Figure 3-5: *Lady Lovemore attacking the blind fiddler with his fiddle*, 1735.
Jevon, *The Devil of a Wife*, frontispiece.

Persecution by dissenters becomes violent when the servants are singing a catch accompanied by a blind fiddle player. Noddy enters and condemns their singing as popish - 'this Lewd, Profane, and Babylonish noise'. He then draws on a scriptural reference as he attacks the vulnerable fiddler as a 'Blind misleader of the blind'.[79] A few pages later Lady Lovemore also attacks the blind fiddler and breaks his fiddle over his head, a dramatic image that was used as a frontispiece for a later edition of the published text (see Figure 3-5). She also physically attacks the other servants and continues to scream at her husband. Despite this behaviour, she sees herself as being ‘so Pious, so Good and Religious a Woman’.[80]

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[78] Thomas Jevon, *The devil of a wife, or, A comical transformation* (London, 1686), pp. 'The Actors Names', 5, 13, 17.
[79] Ibid., p. 8; Matthew 15:14.

The transformation in the play occurs when a Doctor arrives and asks for accommodation for the night. He is sent to stay at Jobson’s house where he is generously welcomed by Jobson’s wife Nell. When Jobson returns home, he attacks Nell verbally and physically and throws the Doctor out. But the Doctor is a magician and conjures a spell that will exchange Nell and Lady Lovemore, bringing torment to Noddy and relief to Sir Richard and Nell:

> Let the Delusion be so strong,
> That none shall know the Right from wrong.
> The Non-con Parson so affright,
> That he may ever Rue this Night;
> Scare him from his Little Wits,
> And his Hypocritick Fits.[81]

When Noddy wakes from a drunken stupor, he is in the dark and believes he is being tormented by Satan. He disavows his religion and confesses his hypocrisy and his gluttony:

> Butler. Art thou a true sear'd Hypocrite?
> Noddy. Yea I am, I am.
> Butler. Falsely zealous, and truly seditious?
> Noddy. Oh, oh, I, I am Sir.
> Butler. Most immoderately given to thy Gut?
> Noddy. Yes, yes, my great delight is in Creature comforts.
> Butler. The chief motive to thy Zeal, those Creature comforts, thou get'st by thy Hypocroisie.
> Noddy. Oh, oh! yes verily.[82]

When Sir Richard finds Lady Lovemore transformed, he is astonished and asks her ‘wilt thou go to Church with me, and leave the sniveling Conventicle?’ She agrees and her response reflects the idea of the medicalisation of nonconformity by describing the dissenters as ‘a Melancholy ill condition'd People.’ As in *Sir Patient Fancy*, Lady Lovemore is cured of her nonconformity when the transformation is reversed, and she has learnt her lesson. Noddy, however, is not cured but hopes to retain his position through hypocrisy: 'though I cannot conform inwardly, I will conform outwardly; and that will do your business as well'.[83] But Sir Richard sees through his hypocrisy and expels him.

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[80] Ibid., p. 11.
[81] Ibid., p. 16.
[82] Ibid., p. 22.

The *London Stage* records 4th March 1686 as the date of the first performance of *The Devil of a Wife*.[84] At this time attacks on dissenters were not unusual but, within days of this performance, they would no longer be government policy. The following day, James II issued his *Directions to Preachers*. This instructed the clergy that they should not 'presume to meddle in matters of State' and that they should not address issues of religious controversy in their sermons.[85] The following week James also issued *A Proclamation of the Kings Majesties most Gracious and General Pardon*.[86] This resulted in the release from prison of many nonconformists. Despite the king's formal interventions, drama continued to include criticism of nonconformity, and this can be seen in the other play that engages with religion during James II's reign.

***The Squire of Alsatia*, Thomas Shadwell, 1688.**

Shadwell returned to the stage with this play after a seven-year absence, following the controversy around *The Lancashire Witches* (see section 2.4 and chapter 8). Although religion is not central to the plot, the play has some interesting things to say about flexible attitudes to religion. We are shown the usual hypocritical nonconformist, some characters who are dissembling religious positions for their advantage, and one character who appears to be a zealous Puritan but seems to have little difficulty in changing her beliefs. The play was a great success - Shadwell reported that 'the House was never so full since it was built, as upon the third day of this Play; and vast numbers went away, that could not be admitted.'[87] This was corroborated by Downes who reported in 1708 that the play 'had an uninterrupted run of 13 days together' and that Shadwell, for his third performance benefit, received 'the greatest receipt they ever had at that house'.[88] The first performance was given at the beginning of May 1688 and this premiere coincided with another major development in James's policy of toleration – the reissuing of his *Declaration of Indulgence* and his insistence that it should be read by the clergy in all parish churches. This provoked many Tories and Anglicans to protest and turn away from James II, with devastating consequences for the king later in the year. The political climate was changing, and religious plurality was creating space for the expression of a wider range of views. Shadwell had been 'Silenc'd for a Non-conformist Poet' for seven years, so the timing of his return could be seen as an indication of changing attitudes.[89] It appears that he was no longer being shunned by the establishment as Downes reports that the play was 'often honour'd with the presence of Chancellour Jeffries'.[90] Later in the run, James II himself attended.[91]

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[83] Ibid., pp. 38, 49.

[84] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, pp. 347-8.

[85] Scottish Record Office., *Calendar of state papers preserved in the Public Record Office : Domestic series. James II. vol.2, January 1686-May 1687* (London, 1964), p. 57.

[86] King James II, *A proclamation of the Kings majesties most gracious and general pardon* (London, 1686).

[87] Thomas Shadwell, *The squire of Alsatia* (London, 1688), 'To the Earl of Dorset and Middlesex'.

[88] John Downes, Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume, (ed), *Roscius Anglicanus* (London, 1987), p. 86.

At the religious centre of the plot is the Puritan Scrapeall and his family. He is described as 'A hypocritical, repeating, praying, Psalm singing, precise fellow' who 'repeats and sings Psalms continually, and prays so loud and vehemently, that he is a Disturbance to his Neighbours'. His hypocrisy is shown through his attempt to arrange the marriage of his daughter Teresia, and his niece Isabella, to his own financial advantage. The men who are pursuing the young women, Truman and Belfond Junior, dissemble a religious interest so that they can attend the religious meetings. Belfond Junior confirms that 'What a constant Church-man she has made of me?' They are doing this because it is the only opportunity they have to see the young women, who are effectively held under religious house arrest by Scrapeall's strict housekeeper Ruth. When Ruth finds the women reading non-religious poetry, she condemns the book as 'Vanity and Darkness' and confiscates it to burn it. Teresia and Isabella see religion very differently to their guardian. They believe that 'True Religion must make one chearful' but they are condemned to the 'out of fashion Cloaths, stiff constrain'd Behaviour, and Sowre Countenances' that is expected of them. Eventually we see that their jailor Ruth is ripe for exploitation as Truman spots an opportunity for Belfond and him to gain access to the young women as 'I never knew an Hypocrite but might easily be cozen'd by another Hypocrite.' His scheme is successful as he turns Ruth into their accomplice through a session of 'lewd dalliance.'[92] Ruth brings the lovers together and, in their conversation, it is clear that they have all been dissembling their religious positions. Isabella, like Colonel Jolly in *The Cutter of Coleman Street*, bewails the effort of dissembling, and the men admit that their attendance at church was not to hear the sermons.

The 'Sanctify'd Family' we see at the start of this play is revealed to be no such thing. The 'Heavenward Pious' Scrapeall is shown to be far more interested in money and is prepared to be unscrupulous in order to acquire it; the lovers are all willing to dissemble religious positions; and Ruth is easily seduced into sex and out of Puritanism.[93] For most of these characters, religion appears to be only skin-deep. This includes Teresia's use of the term 'true religion' – a very charged concept at the time and claimed by most denominations – but, for Teresia, it is only about religion being cheerful. Unlike many of the other plays examined in this chapter, *The Squire of Alsatia* is not a straightforward piece of anti-nonconformist polemic but presents religion as a matter of little consequence. In the late 1680s, when questions are being asked about religious toleration and persecution, we should not, perhaps, be surprised to see a play in which religious attitudes are becoming more unsettled.

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[89] Thomas Shadwell, *Bury fair* (London, 1689), 'Prologue'; John C. Ross, 'Theatricality and Revolution politics in "The Squire of Alsatia" and "Bury-Fair"', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700,* 20 (1996), pp. 217-35, p. 224.

[90] Downes, Milhous and Hume, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 86.

[91] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. 365.

[92] Shadwell, *The squire of Alsatia*, pp. 'Dramatis Personæ', 11, 21, 22, 49, 50, 54.

3.4 Quakers on the English stage, 1700-1720

These unsettled attitudes can also be seen in the early eighteenth century. Dissenters were no longer the centre of attention in the new plays of the 1690s but, in the new century, one group came into prominence – the Quakers or the Religious Society of Friends.[94] In Susanna Centlivre's 1718 comedy, *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, Anne Lovely complains about her Quaker guardians - 'is it not monstrously ridiculous that they should desire to impose their quaking dress upon me'.[95] The importance of dress to the Quakers became a significant feature of plays written in the early eighteenth century. In the forty years before 1700, there were only two new plays in which Quaker characters appeared and three other plays in which characters adopted Quaker disguises.[96] There was a conspicuous change in the first two decades of the eighteenth century when eight new plays featured either Quakers or characters adopting Quaker disguises, or both. Ezra Kempton Maxfield offers a range of reasons for the earlier absence of Quakers in drama, including the idea that Quakers were less distinguishable from other dissenters in that period. He then goes on to argue that the reason Quakers were more prominent in the plays after 1680 is because the Quaker became 'more readily distinguishable, not only by his dress and his use of "plain speech," but also by his occupations.'[97] I do not disagree with the inclusion of speech and occupations in this list, but I will argue that the evidence in the plays shows that importance of Quaker dress provided playwrights with the clearest distinctive feature that they could exploit dramatically, and that this explains why they brought the Quakers out of the theatrical shadows at the beginning of the eighteenth century and made them a regular presence on the stage. As well as giving a higher profile to Quakers, some of these plays portrayed Quakers in a more sympathetic light. This reflected a change in attitude towards Quakers, and other dissenters, in contrast to the stereotypical depictions of nonconformists as hypocrites that we saw in earlier sections.

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[93] Ibid., p. 11, 21.

[94] 'The Quaker movement arose out of the religious ferment of the mid-seventeenth century. George Fox, its leader, emphasized the immediacy of Christ's teaching within each person and held that to this ordained ministers and consecrated buildings were irrelevant … Their refusal to take oaths, pay tithes, or show deference to social superiors led to widespread persecution.' 'Friends, Religious Society of' in *CODCC*.

[95] Susanna Centlivre, *A bold stroke for a wife* (London, 1718), p. 7.

[96] Anonymous, *Mr Turbulent*; Thomas Duffett, *The mock-tempest* (London, 1675); John Leanerd, *The country innocence* (London, 1677); John Leanerd, *The rambling justice* (London, 1678); Thomas Durfey, *The Richmond heiress* (London, 1693).

[97] Ezra Kempton Maxfield, 'The Quakers in English stage plays before 1800', *PMLA,* 45 (1930), pp. 256-73, pp. 256-8.

The history of early Quakerism needs no exposition here as it has been the subject of much excellent scholarship.[98] The focus of this section is the representation of Quakerism at the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth. The 1689 *Toleration Act* had a significant impact on the lives of dissenters and particularly the Quakers, who had suffered some of the most intense persecution under the religious legislation of the reign of Charles II. Although they were now spared the enforcement of these laws, Quakerism continued to be seen by some as one of the most extreme forms of dissent. Both conformists and other dissenters were suspicious of the Quakers, and some imagined the additional menace of a perceived link between Quakerism and Catholicism.[99] Francis Bugg wrote that Quakers in 'their demure and puritanical dress' reminded him of the Jesuits. In 1704, an anonymous pamphlet attacked Quakers in vitriolic language as 'the Spawn of Anarchy and National Confusion' and a 'Wolf in Sheep's Cloathing', drawing on the trope of the wolfish papist. Edward Ward described the Quaker as 'a Maggot in Religion'.[100]

The Quakers' outward nonconformity made them highly distinctive. One facet of this was their speech. The terms 'cant' and 'canting' are used in the plays, usually in a derogatory way, to describe how Quakers spoke. The Quaker characters, and those adopting Quaker disguises, all use this style of language. The most frequent examples are the use of 'thee', 'thou', 'thine', and 'thy' instead of 'you' and 'yours', and there is a liberal sprinkling of words such as 'yea', 'verily', 'wilt' and shalt' and the addition of 'eth' at the end of verbs. Satirizing speech, however, was used widely for all nonconformists rather than only for Quakers, so it lacks the element of particularity. The facet that was particular to Quakers was their dress. As Daniel Defoe wrote - 'a Quaker is a canting thing that Cozens the World by the Purity of his

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[98] The most helpful examples for this section were: Naomi Pullin, *Female friends and the making of transAtlantic Quakerism, 1650-1750* (Cambridge, 2018); William C. Braithwaite and Henry J. Cadbury, *The second period of Quakerism* (Cambridge, 1961); John Punshon, *Portrait in grey : a short history of the Quakers* (London, 1984); Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English society, 1655-1725* (Oxford, 2000); Robynne Rogers Healey, 'History of Quaker Faith and Practice: 1650–1808' in Stephen Ward Angell and Pink Dandelion (ed), *The Cambridge companion to Quakerism* (Cambridge, 2018); Michele Lise Tarter and Catie Gill (ed), *New critical studies on early Quaker women, 1650-1800* (Oxford, 2018).

[99] Knights, *The devil in disguise*, p. 80.

[100] Francis Bugg, *A retrospective-glass for the mis-led Quakers* (London, 1710), p. 517; Anonymous, *The character of a Quaker* (London, 1704), p. 1; Edward Ward, *The reformer. Exposing the vices of the age in several characters* (London, 1701?), p. 12.

Cloaths'.[101] The focus here will, therefore, be on the ways that Quakers used dress, and particularly its plainness, to maintain their distinctiveness.[102] Joan Kendall has drawn attention to the many contemporary references to Quaker dress, particularly female dress.[103] There was also a move towards uniformity in dress, which made Quakers even more distinctive.[104] Naomi Pullin has observed that dress also provided a means by which 'female members identified themselves as spiritually pure.'[105] Most of the Quaker statements about dress expounded what a Quaker should not wear, but there were some instructions about what they should wear. These usually emphasised plainness and the use of various forms of headgear. Some details about Quaker dress were given in the plays under consideration here but, in most cases, the stage directions simply stated that a character enters 'dressed like a Quaker'. The lack of detail implies that the nature of Quaker dress was, at this time, sufficiently distinctive for it to need no further explanation. The view of Quaker dress from outside the movement was not positive. Adrian Davies observes that the commitment to plainness was seen by critics as either vain or ridiculous.[106] It was also trivialized - 'in short, mind the main substantial Parts of Religion, and I shall never trouble you about such Quaker-trifles as your Habits and Dresses or Buttons of your Coats.'[107] The anonymous writer of *The Character of a Quaker* saw Quaker clothing as being not only ridiculous but also the disguise of the hypocrite who 'takes greater care of his Coat than his Conscience' and wrote:

> His Religion must needs be Superficial, when 'tis no Deeper than his Cloaths. Be the Man never so griping, Envious, Proud, Obstinate, etc. Let him have but a great Cloak with small Buttons; a short Cravat, a Hat as broad, as a large Umbrella, and liberty of wearing it in all Companies and Places.[108]

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[101] Daniel Defoe, *D' foe's answer to the Quakers catechism: or, a dark lanthorn for a Friend of the light* (London, 1706), p. 8.

[102] Davies, *Quakers in English society*, p. 46; Joan Kendall, 'The development of a distinctive form of Quaker dress', *Costume,* 19 (1985), pp. 58-74, p. 62; Althea Stewart, 'From iconoclasts to gentle persuaders: plain dress, verbal dissent and narrative voice in some early modern Quaker women's writing', *Women's Writing,* 17 (2010), pp. 111-28, p. 112.

[103] Kendall, 'The development of a distinctive form of Quaker dress', p. 62.

[104] Davies, *Quakers in English society*, pp. 44, 56; Stewart, 'From iconoclasts to gentle persuaders', p. 116; Punshon, Portrait in Grey : A Short History of the Quakers, p. 129; Robynne Rogers Healey, 'History of Quaker Faith and Practice: 1650–1808' in Angell and Dandelion (ed), *The Cambridge companion to Quakerism*, p. 26.

[105] Pullin, *Female friends*, p. 219.

[106] Davies, *Quakers in English society*, p. 46.

[107] John Stillingfleet, *Seasonable advice concerning Quakerism* (London, 1702), p. 9.

[108] Anonymous, *The character of a Quaker*, p. 1.

The idea that outward dress was perceived as the most important aspect of their religion worried some Quakers. Margaret Fox wrote in 1698 that it is ‘a dangerous thing to lead young Friends much into the observation of outward things, which may be easily done; for they can soon get into an outward Garb, to be all alike outwardly; but this will not make them true Christians’.[109] The use of the word ‘outward’ three times in this passage is significant - the presence of the inner light was, and still is, fundamental to Quaker belief. Through this light, God could speak directly to the Quaker without the need for priestly mediation or scriptural guidance.[110] This element of Quakerism worried the Church of England, with its priestly ministers. It was also a concern for other nonconformists, who emphasised the centrality of the word of God as expressed in scripture. Their anxiety was unsurprising as the Quakers’ inner light was beyond the reach of any form of authority. Such a condition would have been seen as a potential threat to the good order of the state and of society more widely. The contrast between the inward and the outward character was important to Quakers, but it also exposed them to attack as hypocrites. At the turn of the century, Ward wrote about the Quaker that, ‘His chief Study is to Counterfeit Outward and Visible Signs of an Inward and Spiritual Grace, by which means, amongst the Ignorant, he makes Formality pass for Religion, Hypocrisie for Holiness’.[111]

Religious tensions and conflicts persisted throughout the period, but the religious climate gradually became more nuanced. From 1685 onwards, when religious toleration became an increasingly prominent issue for debate and the 1689 *Toleration Act* removed legal persecution of dissenters, the widely expressed condemnation of dissenters shaded into a more complex range of attitudes. This was reflected in the ways that Quakers were portrayed in the plays of the new century – some hostile, some neutral, some sympathetic. This complexity also meant that dissenters no longer provided the playwrights with straightforward and easy targets. The Quakers, however, offered dramatists a distinction that could be exploited - their wish to be seen as different from those around them. As Pullin and Kathryn Woods have observed, being victims of persecution had been a defining identity for the Quakers and had played a central role in maintaining their sense of uniqueness.[112] But the changing religious climate meant that this had become somewhat diffused. New attributes of distinction were needed, and Quaker dress became an increasingly important way of achieving this. Stage costume offered an excellent means both to create distinctive and engaging Quaker characters, and to provide entertaining disguises. This opportunity for distinctiveness is, I believe, the most convincing explanation of why Quakers appeared in so many plays at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

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[109] Quoted in Kendall, 'The development of a distinctive form of Quaker dress', p. 62.
[110] Pullin, *Female friends*, p. 4.
[111] Ward, *The reformer.*, p. 12.
[112] Naomi Pullin and Kathryn Woods, ‘Introduction: Approaching early modern exclusion and inclusion’ in Naomi Pullin and Kathryn Woods (ed), *Negotiating exclusion in early modern England, 1550-1800* (New York, 2021), p. 5.

It is unlikely that the Friends would have appreciated this attention, however, as their views about the stage had always been fundamentally negative. George Fox wrote ‘against the Mountebanks playing Tricks on their Stages; for they burdened the pure Life, and stirred up Peoples Minds to Vanity.’[113] This condemnation of the frivolity of drama was shared by other nonconformists and earlier Puritans but, as Tamara Underiner has argued, the motivations of the Quakers were different.[114] Honesty and sincerity were, and still are, important principles for Quakers. The stage, however, was seen as a place of insincerity as drama is, by its very nature, a form of counterfeit.[115]

A City Ramble, Charles Knipe, 1715.

The plays of the early years of the eighteenth century offered some interesting variations on the stage dissenter, but the established stereotypes continued to be seen. Two of the stereotypical elements of immoral behaviour by religious characters - drunkenness and licentiousness - were particularly problematic for Quakers who were expected to be temperate, if not abstemious. The sobriety of their clothing and their demeanour was also reflected in their attitude to drink. The hypocrisy of the drunken and lecherous Quaker was presented in an unsubtle way in Knipe’s *A City Ramble*. Little is known about Charles Knipe except that this was his only play.[116] In the play a Presbyterian, a Jew, and a Quaker are brought before the law. The Presbyterian Parson describes in detail the components of a punch he has been drinking, which includes a ‘Gallon of true, powerful Presbyterian Brandy’. The Quaker is reported for being as ‘Drunk last Night as a Lord, he sung, and roar’d, and was as wicked as the best of them.’ To add the trope of lust to that of drunkenness, he was found in a bawdy house with a woman and ‘in a very unseemly posture too’. The turnkey, Twang, demonstrates an understanding of Quaker practices and theology in his questioning. This indicates that knowledge of the features of Quakerism could be found beyond the movement. He calls the Quaker ‘Friend Abraham’ and refers to the woman as his ‘sister’, mimicking forms of Quaker address. He asks what 'hath moved thee to uncover the Nakedness of thy Sister' and wonders if he was 'mov'd to it by the Agitation of the Light within'. This suggestion that the inner light can be a force for sin strikes at the heart of Quaker belief and was one of the weapons used by their critics. The worthlessness of this Quaker is confirmed later in the play when his wife turns up to offer the defence that he could not have committed adultery as he is not sexually capable and 'cannot, as he ought, administer the Comforts of Wedlock even unto me his Wife'.[117]

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[113] George Fox, *A journal or historical account of the life, travels, sufferings, Christian experiences and labour of love in the work of the ministry, of George Fox* (London, 1694), p. 25.

[114] Tamara Underiner, ‘Plain speech acts’ in Lance Gharavi (ed), *Religion, theatre, and performance : Acts of faith* (London, 2011), p. 103.

[115] Punshon, *Portrait in grey*, p. 131; Ezra Kempton Maxfield, 'Friendly testimony regarding stage-plays', *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association,* 14 (1925), pp. 13-21, p. 14; Underiner, ‘Plain speech acts’, p. 100.

[116] Thomas Whincop, *Scanderbeg: or, love and liberty. A tragedy. To which are added a list of all the dramatic authors, with some account of their lives* (London, 1747), p. 255.

Two plays by Susanna Centlivre - *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, 1718, and *The Beau's Duel* 1704.

Susanna Centlivre was one of the most prolific playwrights in this period with sixteen plays to her name. She mixed socially with other leading playwrights, who wrote prologues and epilogues for each other's works. She was a Whig and openly supported the Hanoverian succession. [118] In *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, Centlivre presents us with another stereotypical nonconformist. The wealthy Anne Lovely cannot marry without the agreement of her four guardians, one of whom is Obadiah Prim, 'a very rigid Quaker'. The importance of dress to the Quakers is emphasised by Prim's occupation as a hosier. Mrs Prim and Anne criticise each other's clothing and disagree about which 'most resemblest the Saint and which the Sinner'. For Anne, Quakers are full of 'Pride, Vanity, Self-conceit and Ambition' and she sees the 'pinch'd cap' and 'formal Habit' as the 'proudest of all' and an 'Abomination of Cant'. For Mrs Prim, the latest fashions are hateful – 'cut Hair, spotted Face, and bare Necks' and 'the Abomination of hooped Petticoats.'[119] Her concerns were reflected in a report from the Quakers 1718 Yearly Meeting which condemned 'that immodest fashion of going with naked necks and breasts, and wearing of hooped petticoats.'[120] It is the implied sexuality of fashion that alarms Mrs Prim most – 'Thy naked Bosom allureth the Eye …. And corrupteth the Soul with evil Longings.' Obadiah Prim enters and immediately tells Anne to cover up her naked breasts – and then continues obsessing about how they 'inflame Desire'. If we have any doubts about the hypocrisy that lurks beneath the surface of this character, they are quickly dispelled when Anne tells how she saw Obadiah with Mary (presumably a servant) in the pantry and 'begg'd her to show you a little, little, little Bit of her delicious Bubby'.[121]

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[117] Charles Knipe, *A city ramble: or, the humours of the compter* (London, 1715), pp. 14, 16, 53.
[118] J. Milling, 'Susanna Centlivre' in *ODNB Online*, 4994.
[119] Centlivre, *A bold stroke for a wife*, pp. 5, 16.
[120] Quoted in Punshon, *Portrait in grey*, p. 129.
[121] Centlivre, *A bold stroke for a wife*, pp. 16-18.

Anne articulates the idea of the Quaker religion being only costume-deep when she poses a rhetorical question to Mrs Prim: ‘Does your Virtue consist in your Dress, Mrs Prim?’ The importance of dress to the Prims is confirmed when Obadiah says to one of Anne’s suitors ‘thy Garb favoureth too much of the Vanity of the Age for my Approbation’. In Act Five, Anne reappears in Quaker dress and is commended by the Prims for being ’better without thy monsterous Hoop Coat and Patches!’ In her response, Anne adopts the inward/outward trope of hypocrisy by saying how frightening it would be if heaven ’shou’d turn your Inside outward and show all the Spots of your Hypocrisy’. Mrs Prim tries to encourage Anne by saying that she will gain more suitors dressed as a Quaker. For Anne, this confirms her belief in the superficiality of Quaker religion – ‘I ever thought, indeed, that there was more Design than Godliness in the pinch’d Cap.’[122]

Disguise is a regular feature of comedies in this period, and it is a major theme in Centlivre’s play. Fainwell, Anne’s lover, adopts four different disguises to visit each of her guardians. An intercepted letter reveals that Simon Pure, a leading Quaker from Pennsylvania, is due to arrive and Fainwell decides to impersonate Pure to gain access to Anne. He demonstrates the effectiveness of disguise by saying that he will not be the first ‘who made his Fortune in a Masquerade.’[123] When Fainwell arrives at the Prim’s house impersonating Pure, he sees Anne in Quaker clothing and describes it, in an aside, as a disguise. His own disguise is so effective that Anne does not recognise him until they are left alone. He then tells Anne to pretend to convert to Quakerism, which she does. The plot is complicated by the arrival of the real Simon Pure, but Anne’s pretence convinces the Prims who are overjoyed and consent to the marriage, after which Fainwell reveals his true identity.

Centlivre did not invent the dramatic idea of a lover dressing as a specific Quaker to gain access to his love, only for the real character to appear later in the play. This can be seen in an earlier play called *The Petticoat Plotter* (1712) by Newburgh Hamilton, who was an Irish playwright and librettist, and wrote libretti for some of Handel’s works. In this play, the idea for the disguise is combined with an attack on the Quakers. The aptly named Plotwell tells Truelove that he must disguise himself as a Quaker and that:

> you must immediately change your Habit for this wicked and unseemly Garment, you must be cloth’d with a sanctify’d Cloak lined with Hypocrisy; a large Band stiffen’d with the Starch of Zeal; and a broad-brimm’d Hat to cover your Eyes from beholding the Vanities of this World.[124]

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[122] Ibid., pp. 16, 20, 51.

[123] Ibid., p. 42.

[124] Newburgh Hamilton, *The petticoat-plotter* (London, 1720), pp. 22-23.

The metaphor of the ‘Starch of Zeal’ reflects the way early modern Quakers were seen by many of their contemporaries. For example, a pamphlet of 1689 describes the Quaker’s walk as ‘slow, starch'd and severe’.[125] It was a useful metaphor that implied both a stiffness in demeanour, and a morality of zealous uprightness. The image of a ‘Cloak lined with Hypocrisy’ is a powerful metaphor for the stereotypical hypocrite.

A Quaker disguise is also adopted in Centlivre’s *The Beau's Duel.* Mrs Plotwell (that name again) assumes a disguise to forward her plot. She needs to be attractive to Careful, who wants to marry ‘a religious woman’ with ‘a plain way of Living’ and so she disguises herself as a Quaker. She is introduced by her friend Toper who tells Careful that he has tried to persuade Plotwell not to dress in such a restrained manner ‘but in vain, she's as averse to the Fashions, as other Women are fond of 'em’. Plotwell herself tells Careful that she condemns ‘monstrous Fashion’ and ‘Tea-Table Vanity’ and says she loves retirement and must have time for her devotions.[126] The importance of dress to the Quakers and their condemnation of fashion is reflected here in the decision by the wily Plotwell to choose costume as the quickest and most effective way of persuading Careful of her devoutness.

Impersonating a Quaker through dress and demeanour can be found beyond the drama of this period. A 1698 pamphlet relates the story of a Jacobite conspirator who can stay undercover by adopting ‘the Habit of a Quaker’ and ‘the demure Looks and canting Dialect of the Quaker.’[127] A Quaker costume had also become a common choice of disguise in society. In Charles Johnson’s *The Masquerade* (1719), Lady Frances invites a friend to see her costume options for that evening’s masquerade - a Shepherdess, a Nun, a Dairy-maid, or a Quaker.[128] These examples of hypocritical Quakers and Quaker disguises continue the trope of undermining the integrity of nonconformists that playwrights had been adopting since the Restoration. In the early eighteenth century, however, these negative portrayals run in parallel with more sympathetic representations of Quakers, to which we will now turn.

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The more positive attitude towards the Quakers in some of the plays of the new century reflected changes in society. Through the 1690s, many Quakers had sought to engage with the world around them, particularly in business and in civic affairs.[129] Catie Gill and Michele Lise

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[125] Anonymous, *The Quakers art of courtship* (London, 1689), p. 28.

[126] Susanna Centlivre, *The beau's duel* (London, 1702), pp. 34-35.

[127] Richard Kingston, *A true history of the several designs and conspiracies against His Majesties sacred person and government* (London, 1698), p. 5.

[128] Charles Johnson, *The masquerade* (London, 1719), p. 20.

[129] Pullin, *Female friends*, p. 233; Bill Stevenson, ‘The social integration of post-Restoration dissenters, 1660-1725’ in Margaret Spufford (ed), *The world of rural dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 386; Punshon, *Portrait in grey*, p. 103; Braithwaite and Cadbury, *The second period of Quakerism*, p. 469;

Tarter argue that the Friends increasingly sought to combine their religious witness with a sense of social responsibility.[130] Some still saw the Quakers as ‘a band of annoying eccentrics’, as Davies has observed, but their growing involvement in society led many people away from the view that Quakers were a political or social threat.[131] This shift in attitude is exemplified by changes in the previously thorny issue of oaths. Alongside their increasing engagement in society, the Quakers were also campaigning in the 1690s for an alternative to swearing oaths. This would eventually succeed with the passing of the *Affirmation Act* in 1696.[132]

***The Humour of the Age*, Thomas Baker, 1701.**

This was Baker’s first play and, along with two other plays, led to the unsuccessful prosecution of some actors for immoral expressions. His career as a playwright was short, after which he turned to journalism and, under a female pseudonym, inaugurated *The Female Tatler*.[133] The first sympathetic Quaker of the new century can be seen in Baker’s comedy, and she is an appealing character. Tremilia is described in the cast list as ‘A young, handsom, civiliz'd Quaker’. She is described at the end of the play as ‘a beauteous person, and a beauteous mind.’ She is also very intelligent and verbally outmatches the men around her, who she mostly views as preposterous. We see her alone at the beginning of Act Three as she delivers a moving soliloquy about the beauty of nature, which she prefers to the ‘grating Discords of a contentious Town’. Her contemplation is interrupted by Railston, the man who is pursuing her. She criticises his way of life where ‘the only Diversion in this Age is Lewdness’. He retorts with the age-old defence that it is wrong for men ‘to be blam'd for Lewdness by those that excite it’. He presses himself upon her, but she is rescued by the arrival of other characters, and she flees the scene. She later argues against all the diversions of the town including the theatre where she sees ‘Vice is represented more for Example than Ridicule.’ This dichotomy reflects the dispute between the antitheatricals and the playwrights during the Collier controversy about the purpose of drama, as discussed in 2.3. In Act Five, Freeman admits that he loves Tremilia, which amazes his friend who sees her as a penniless Quaker, although ‘her Person's tolerable enough’. Tremilia agrees to marry Freeman, at which point she admits that she has ‘so long dissembl'd’. As can be seen in earlier Restoration plays, leaving a sympathetic

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Simon Dixon, '*Quaker communities in London, 1667-c1714*' (PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2005), pp. 223-247.

[130] Michele Lise Tarter and Catie Gill, ‘Introduction’ in Tarter and Gill (ed), *New critical studies on early Quaker women*, p. 4.

[131] Davies, *Quakers in English society*, p. 221; Dixon, '*Quaker Communities in London*', pp. 240, 246.

[132] Dixon, '*Quaker Communities in London*', p. 226; *An Act that the solemne affirmation & declaration of the people called Quakers shall be accepted instead of an oath in the usual forme* (1695-96).

[133] Olive Baldwin and Thelma Wilson, ‘Thomas Baker’ in *ODNB Online*, 1137.

dissenter on stage at the end of the play was not good practice. So Tremilia reveals that she is not a Quaker, and that she is wealthy. She found the pretence of being a poor Quaker a useful way of avoiding the attentions of men - until she found the right one.[134]

***The Fair Quaker of Deal,* Charles Shadwell, 1710.**

Charles Shadwell gave a Quaker the highest profile by making her the title character in this highly successful play that was still being presented in 1725.[135] He was the son of Thomas Shadwell, the playwright and Poet Laureate, and he wrote seven plays that were performed in London and Dublin.[136] The nature of this play indicates that he shared his father's sympathies towards nonconformity. The play was premiered on 25th February 1710, just two days before the start of the trial of Henry Sacheverell (see section 2.1).[137] The trial and the premiere of Shadwell's play took place in a febrile atmosphere of religious conflict and these divisions are reflected in the play. Two sisters – the Quaker Dorcas and the conforming Arabella – are highly critical of each other's religion. Their family name is Zeal, which gives an indication of the passion of their religious commitments. Dorcas accuses Arabella of being 'of the Church belonging to the Wicked', while Arabella describes Quakerism as 'that senseless Religion of yours'. She attacks Dorcas's manner of speech as 'your whining faith; 'tis one stubborn Article of your Cant'. From her first line, Dorcas uses the canting style of speech – 'Why look thee Arabella, my Religion and Dress may seem strange unto thee, because thou art of the Church belonging to the Wicked'.[138]

In this atmosphere of religious conflict, Shadwell offers us contrasting personalities. He makes the nonconforming Dorcas a sympathetic character whose integrity, as Maxfield observes, is never in doubt.[139] The contrast is emphasised by making her conforming sister Arabella vengeful and duplicitous. Later in the play, Arabella conspires to break up her sister's relationship with Worthy by forging a letter to Dorcas from Worthy's non-existent wife. A Quaker disguise is once again an important plot point - in Act Five Arabella enters 'dress'd like a Quaker in Mens Cloathes' to further her plot against the marriage of Dorcas and Worthy. She also adopts canting language as in 'Friend, thy Brother did send this unto thee; when thou hast overlook'd the Contents thereof, thou wilt know my Business here.' When Arabella's disguise falls away, she is dismissed by Dorcas as a 'sad facetious girl.' To portray a Quaker so positively in comparison to a conformist is unusual in this period, particularly during the Sacheverell controversy. Also, there is more than one Quaker disguise in this play - one of the sub-plots involves the ‘whore’ Jenny Private dressing as a Quaker and impersonating Dorcas. As the play draws towards its conclusion, Jenny enters, still in her Quaker clothes, and we are faced with two Quakers on stage – one genuine and one in disguise. But, once again, having a nonconformist as part of a happy ending is to be avoided. Once Dorcas is engaged to be married to the conforming Worthy, she metaphorically casts off her Quaker costume and agrees to join the Church of England ‘to make our Marriage-Yoak more chearful’.[140]

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[134] Thomas Baker, *The humour of the age* (London, 1701), 'Dramatis Personae', pp. 6, 25, 27, 55, 61, 65.
[135] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, Part 2, p. 840.
[136] Kate Bennett, 'Thomas Shadwell' in *ODNB Online*, 25195.
[137] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, Part 2, p. 214.
[138] Charles Shadwell, *The fair Quaker of Deal* (London, 1710), p. 11.
[139] Maxfield, 'The Quakers in English stage plays before 1800', p. 269.

***The Humours of Elections,* Susanna Centlivre, 1715.**

In a reversal of her earlier attitude to Quakers, Centlivre introduces an honest and decent Quaker into this election satire. He only appears briefly in the last quarter of the play and is introduced simply as ‘a Quaker filling wine’ at a large gathering. The issue of abstinence arises again, but this character is pouring wine not drinking it. He is brought into the action when asked whether he will support a particular candidate in the election. As a plain-speaking Quaker with the name of Scruple, he answers bluntly that he will not vote for the candidate because he does not believe him to be an honest man. He keeps his cool when criticised by the High-Church Lady Worthy who attacks anyone she believes to be non-conforming. Scruple politely implies that she is drunk and rude, which has much truth in it. She accuses Scruple of being the ‘spawn of old Noll’ (a reference to Cromwell), an ‘old canting villain’, and being part of a ‘canting congregation’. She calls another character ‘You Presbyterian Son of a Conventicle’.[141] The honesty of this Quaker presents him in a positive light, in contrast to the coarseness of the drunk High-Church conformist.

***The Quaker’s Wedding,* Richard Wilkinson, 1719.**

Quaker disguise also plays an important role in the plot of this play.[142] Sir Feeble Goodwill is ‘an old merry Gentleman, somewhat decay’d in his Fortunes.’ He wants a comfortable life and needs to marry into some money. He has identified a likely candidate in a Quaker, the appropriately named Widow Purelight, but she has vowed that she will only marry a Quaker, so Sir Feeble needs to convince the widow that he has converted. The perception of the Quakers’ emphasis on clothing as a priority is reflected in Sir Feeble’s first action, which is to acquire the correct costume. The plainness is shown by his acquisition of ‘a Coat, Hat and primitive Cravat’. The resonance of this pretence as a theatrical concept is made explicit by the fact that Sir Feeble has borrowed his Quaker costume from the playhouse. The expectation that a theatre will have a Quaker costume in its stock is further evidence that Quakers had become a regular presence on the stage at this time. He has also been ‘practising the Cant’. His adoption of different language is clear when he appears before the widow in his Quaker costume. One of his first lines is ‘I say both yea and verily, ‘tis the evil spirit of contradiction, that waxeth strong in thee’. The widow says she is amazed at his sudden conversion but fears that it is not honest. Despite this, there is chemistry between them, and the widow admits that her ‘Zeal waxeth warm.’ They start drinking in good humour and, when the bottle is empty, the widow says she will ‘supply thee from my secret place’ and they leave the stage together. This sensual language continues when we see them after they are married and when ‘Consummation approacheth’. As we saw in *The Man of Mode* in section 2.1, religious language can be used as a sexual metaphor and, in this scene, they express their desire to ’both steal to Heaven’. The widow says she will ‘hide myself in thy Bosom, and be not far from thy Heart of Grace.’[143]

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[140] Shadwell, *The fair Quaker of Deal*, pp. 50, 54, 63.

[141] Susanna Centlivre, *The humours of elections* (London, 1715), pp. 62, 65-66.

[142] This play was originally published in 1703 as *Vice Regain’d.* References are to the version performed in 1719 and published in 1723. Richard Wilkinson, *The Quaker's wedding* (London, 1723).

At the end of this play, in contrast to others, we are left with a Quaker happily married to a man who is prepared to assume the costume and behaviour of a Quaker to gain his contentment. This is not perhaps a genuine conversion, but it is benign and at least the play does not demand that the nonconformist converts. Their use of sensual religious language also shows that it had now become acceptable to portray on stage a woman who could be both true to her dissenting religion as well as enjoying an active sex life within her marriage. Sir Feeble also seems happy with his new life as a Quaker husband. The play does not show us whether there is any depth to his conversion, but this doesn’t really matter as he appears to be merry in his masquerade.

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Throughout the period, when the dramatists turned their attention to religious groups, it was rarely through a sympathetic lens. Negative portrayals of Quakers as hypocrites in the new century followed this approach, as did the satirical use of Quaker disguises. These were, however, counterbalanced by more nuanced and sympathetic Quaker characters. This contrast reflects the wider divisions at the time about the Quakers and dissenters more generally. The sympathetic portrayals could be partly a reflection of the changing attitudes to politeness and manners, but the evidence from other plays in this period does not bear this out. The dramatists’ attitude to the Non-Jurors and Catholics in the same period was uncompromisingly negative and often hostile, as we will see in sections 4.3 and 5.2. This reflects the fact that the Non-Jurors continued to challenge the authority of the regime, whereas the Quakers had, for some, reached a more compliant relationship. Although many Quakers strove to integrate more with society, at the same time they wanted to preserve their religious distinctiveness. I believe that the dramatists turned their attention to the Quakers at this time with an agenda that was as much aesthetic as political, and that the Quakers were selected for attention because they provided a distinctive appearance and outward demeanour that could be exploited in a wide range of dramatic ways. In the final scene of *The Quaker's Wedding,* Sir Feeble calls his new Quaker wife 'my shining Lamp of Refulgency' and 'my radiant Princess of Delight'.[144] Perhaps this image that the inner light of the Quaker can shine out to fascinate others may also have captivated the dramatists.

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[143] Ibid., ‘Dramatis Personae’, pp. 10, 24, 51-52.

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[144] Ibid., pp. 68, 71.

4 CATHOLICISM

Anti-Catholicism was a constant presence in this period. Catholics were seen as being both religiously corrupt and politically dangerous – a combination brought together by Marvell in his *Account of the Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government in England.*[1] Lake argues that many Protestants saw Catholicism as 'an anti-religion, a perfectly symmetrical negative image of true Christianity.'[2] Catholics were believed by many to be more loyal to the Pope than to the monarch, and to be at the root of some famous attacks on the state, such as the Armada, the Gunpowder Plot, and the Great Fire of London. They were often seen as deceitful – Roger L'Estrange saw them as 'Papists in Masquerade, that work under-ground, like Moles'.[3] As mentioned in the Introduction, some scholars see this fear of Catholicism as a reflection of concerns about the popish inclinations of the courts of Charles II and James II.

Anti-Catholic prejudice was not a simple one and a useful analysis of its multivalency has been provided by Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille and Geraldine Vaughan, based on the work of John Wolffe. They use three definitions of anti-Catholicism in their study - constitutional anti-Catholicism (perception of disloyalty to the Crown and nation), anti-Popery (a theological prejudice against the power of the pope and the Church of Rome), and ethnic prejudice (seeing continental and Irish identities as inferior).[4] Each of these definitions are reflected both in religious life in England and in the new plays of the period.

This chapter will begin by exploring four plays written in the wake of the Popish Plot, a period that Streete observes 'saw the most concentrated volume of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic drama written during the seventeenth century.' The focus then shifts to plays written after the Glorious Revolution, including two pamphlet plays written in 1690 that, whilst being intensely anti-Catholic, also give us glimpses of the religious plurality of the time. The final section examines two plays written soon after the Hanoverian succession in 1714 and the Jacobite resistance to it. All these plays are explicitly anti-Catholic and do not pull their punches. Most of them also reflect concerns about the political dangers of Catholicism. As Streete has observed, in contrast to the plays of the early seventeenth century, the politicisation of religion in the plays of this period is overt, both in the prologues and epilogues and in the plays themselves.[5] In some cases, however, the anti-Catholicism is combined with anticlericalism in ways that broaden the condemnations.

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[1] Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 2; Marvell, *An account of the growth of popery, and arbitrary government in England*.

[2] Peter Lake, 'Anti-popery', p. 73.

[3] Sir Roger L'Estrange, *The character of a papist in masquerade, supported by authority and experience in answer to The character of a popish successor* (London, 1681), p. 4.

[4] Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille and Geraldine Vaughan, 'The Catholic "other"' in Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille and Geraldine Vaughan (ed), *Anti-Catholicism in Britain and Ireland, 1600-2000 : practices, representations and ideas* (Cham, Switzerland, 2020), p. 3; John Wolffe, 'A comparative historical categorisation of anti-Catholicism', *Journal of Religious History,* 39 (2015), pp. 182-202.

One issue that emerges in some of the plays in this chapter is the complexity around royal successions. The importance of these moments, and the literature that responded to them, has been analysed in a recent book, edited by Paulina Kewes and Andrew McRae. They argue in their introduction that, although much of the huge corpus of Stuart succession literature is celebratory, 'these texts performed important work, politically and culturally.'[6] The polemical nature of the pamphlet plays written at the time of William III's somewhat questionable succession helped to strengthen his claim through an emphasis on the dangers of Catholic monarchy (see section 4.2). This danger will also be seen in section 4.3 when the Protestant heroine of *Lady Jane Gray* fails in her attempt to prevent the throne passing to Mary Tudor.

4.1 The Popish Plot

The heightened political and religious tensions that followed Titus Oates's revelations were reflected in new plays, as dramatists engaged vigorously with political and religious issues. This section will focus on four plays that were written during this period. The portrayals of Catholicism and Catholics in these plays were mostly negative and, in some cases, vitriolic. Anti-Catholicism was intense at this time but, as we will see, these plays are not examples of straightforward anti-Catholic polemic - some of the central characters under attack were not true Catholics, one of the Catholic monarchs is tormented by his conscience and, in two of the plays, anti-Catholicism is combined with one of the other important themes, anticlericalism. Also, with the Popish Plot at its height, it is not surprising that all these plays are full of plotting. Most contain Catholic conspiracies of one kind or another and, in some cases, the parallels with events in the real world were clearly drawn.

***The Excommunicated Prince*, attributed to William Bedloe, 1679.**

The subtitle of this play describes it as being 'the Popish Plot in a Play' and, as Streete has observed, it is a 'thinly disguised allegory' of the Plot.[7] The play transfers the outline of the Popish Plot to Georgia, where Greek Orthodoxy is the established religion. Its central story is one of constitutional anti-Catholicism - a conspiracy by Jesuits to kill the Prince of Georgia, who has been excommunicated by the Pope. It is likely that this play was never intended for performance, and that it can be classed as a pamphlet play. Susan Wiseman observes that pamphlet plays emerged in the 1640s and she positions them 'at the borders of print and oral culture, political theory and polemic, plays and news.'[8] There is no evidence that any of these plays were performed in theatres in the period, and it seems more likely that the primary aim was for the plays to be read aloud, perhaps in coffee houses.[9] Many of these plays portray events from recent history and address themes which were still very topical when the plays were written. Pamphlet plays were often printed and structured in the same way as plays that were performed, but there is one distinctive feature which could indicate that they were not intended for performance. On the title page, where details of the first performance would normally be shown, details of the events of the story were shown instead. In the case of *The Excommunicated Prince,* for example, the title page says that the play was acted, not by a specific company of actors as would be usual, but by 'his Holiness's Servants'. Also, the author of the play was stated as being Captain William Bedloe (see Figure 4-1).

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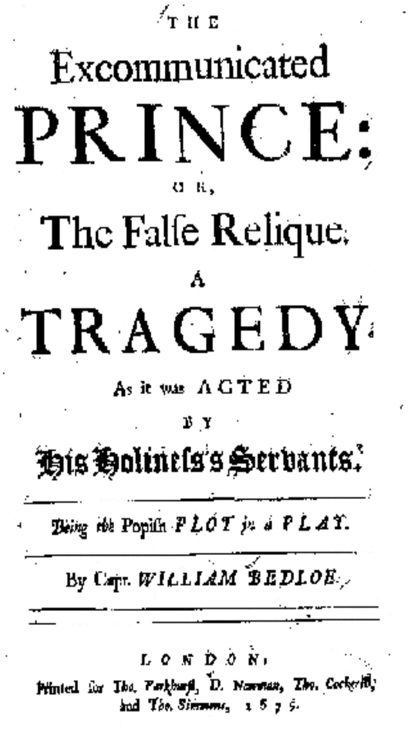
[5] Streete, *Apocalypse*, pp. 22, 248.

[6] Paulina Kewes and Andrew McRae (ed), *Stuart succession literature : moments and transformations* (Oxford, 2019), p. 2.

[7] William Bedloe, *The excommunicated prince, or, The false relique a tragedy* (London, 1679), title page; Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 202.



THE
Excommunicated
PRINCE:
OR,
The Falſe Relique.
A
TRAGEDY.
As it was ACTED
BY
His Holineſs's Servants.

Being the Popiſh PLOT in a PLAY.

By Capt. WILLIAM BEDLOE.

LONDON,
Printed for Tho. Parkhurſt, D. Newman, Tho. Cockerill,
and Tho. Simmons, 1679.

Figure 4-1: The title page of The Excommunicated Prince, 1679.

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[8] Susan Wiseman, 'Pamphlet plays in the civil war news market: Genre, politics, and "context"', *Prose Studies,* 21 (1998), pp. 66-83, p. 69.

[9] Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 244; Lois Potter, 'Politics and popular culture: the theatrical response to the revolution' in Lois G. Schwoerer (ed), *The Revolution of 1688-1689 : changing perspectives* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 188.

Bedloe was an associate of Titus Oates and was one of those who gave evidence of the Popish Plot. Attributing the authorship of the play to him would have enhanced the sales potential of the pamphlet, even though he almost certainly wasn't its author.[10]

The play begins with a group of Jesuits plotting to kill the Prince and replace him with Polidorus, a seemingly loyal general of the Prince's forces. But Polidorus is not what he seems. As we have seen in other plays that include characters in disguise, a world of masquerade is created around them by the playwright, and this is very much the case here. This is clear from the first lines of the play when Polidorus starts his soliloquy with 'I've so long worn a borrow'd Shape, that now / Deception is the only thing I know.' His deception takes many forms. He pretends to be the Prince's loyal supporter and a follower of the Grecian Church, whereas he is plotting with the Jesuits to overthrow the Prince and restore the Catholic faith in Georgia. But he is also deceiving the Jesuits and the Pope. His actions are not religiously motivated and, as described in the Dramatis Personae, he is an atheist. His aim is simply to acquire power for himself. He makes this clear to the audience in a soliloquy at the beginning of Act Two:

> And Rome itself, drest me in this Disguise,
> That undiscern'd, I might to Scepters rise.
> The Grecian-Churches Viz'rd, I must wear;
> And like an Imp of Hell, in Robes of Light appear.

He also sees his position as an opportunity for financial gain: 'Then may Religious Fools securely pay / Honours to Heaven, and Rewards to Me.'[11] One other deception he adopts to further his ambition is to pretend to be in love with the Catholic, and much older, Queen Mother who has fallen in love with him.

The masquerading in this play does not stop with Polidorus. The trope of the disguised Catholic is explicit. The Jesuits look forward to the time when 'We need not then in these strange Shapes appear. / Wear others Looks, or speak in Character'. They look back at many years of successful dissembling – 'These forty Years, unseen as Night, I've gone / Through snaky Ways; and more strange Shapes put on'. They seek revenge against those who 'all our Cheats display; / Take off our Masks, and shew us to the Day.' One of the Jesuits explains how they will fool the people into believing in the efficacy of relics by using 'A Chaffin-dish of Coals, to make it seem / To sweat, and weep, by melting of the Liquor.' Later, the same Jesuit announces to the people that 'I hope none here questions but these Reliques and Images / Are instrumental to great Blessings'. He then goes on to list the many Catholic rituals that were anathema to Protestants:

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[10] The most likely author is Thomas Walter. Dorothy Turner, 'Restoration drama in the public sphere: propaganda, the playhouse, and published drama', *Restoration and 18th Century Theatre Research,* 12 (1997), pp. 18-39, p. 27; Alan Marshall, William Bedloe in *ODNB Online,* 1940; Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. 272.

[11] Bedloe, *The excommunicated prince*, pp. 1, 7.

> the Sound and ringing of Bells,
> ……..
> Holy Medals, Agnus Dei's, Blessed Grains,
> Priviledg'd Altars, Beads, and Rosaries,
> Holy Oil, Tapers, Branches, Ashes, Crosses.
> And the three Sorts of Holy Water
> Do work supernatural Effects.[12]

At the end of the scene, we hear briefly from the diseased people who have visited the relic. Two believe it has cured them, but the third is not fooled – 'I know this new Religion's but a Cheat, / Hells Horrors cover'd with a gaudy Bait.' Some of the Prince's friends see through the masquerade, but the Prince does not. One of his friends is appalled at how the Jesuits pretend to be true to the Grecian Church and use this as 'An holy Mask for their black Perjury! / Yet with such Paint they shaddow the Deceit'.[13]

The hero of *The Excommunicated Prince*, and the nemesis of Polidorus, is Miletas. This character represents the wisdom of English Protestantism. He was brought up a Catholic by a father who was part of the Jesuit conspiracy. On his deathbed, however, the father repented and told Miletas to avoid further involvement in the conspiracy and to leave the country and go to a place 'where the Reform'd Religion flourishes.' This, of course, is England, where he spends a year and is converted to Protestantism. He sees his conversion as an example of the medicalisation of religious belief – 'England, to thee this happy cure I owe'. He hears of the dangers of Catholicism in Georgia and returns. He decides to return in disguise and rejoin the Jesuit conspirators undercover. This will enable him to find out 'their subtile Roads, And windings into Woods of Night and Darkness'. After he hears the details of the plot to assassinate the Prince he reveals them to the Prince. Polidorus and his confederates are arrested and condemned. Although the play is set in Georgia and the established religion is described as Grecian, this religion is an allegory for Protestantism. As the play progresses, the allegory thins to the point of disappearance. The Prince declares himself as a Protestant prince and one of his friends refers to ‘our reform'd Religion’.[14]

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[12] Ibid., pp. 9-10, 22, 33, 39.
[13] Ibid., pp. 26, 40.

The Massacre of Paris, Nathaniel Lee, 1679.

In a 1679 pamphlet Charles Blount wrote that ‘French Arms’ was one of the ways in which popery could be brought into England. He painted a vivid picture of a massacre of Protestants at the hands of ‘Troops of Papists’, which most readers would probably have imagined as French.[15] This pamphlet caused concern for the regime, and those who distributed it were arrested.[16] Another work written in 1679 that reflected this link between anti-Catholicism, Francophobia, and the threat of violence was Lee’s play *The Massacre of Paris*. In the Prologue, Lee draws together ‘Rome’s Religion and French Government’ and sees ‘Slavery and Superstition’ across the ‘Narrow Seas’.[17] As we saw in section 2.4, this criticism of France was a factor in the banning of the play. There is also no evidence that Christopher Marlowe’s 1593 play on the same subject was ever performed during the period.[18]

The historical setting for the play is the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre of Huguenots in France in 1572, and it shows a Catholic regime plotting the violent eradication of Protestantism. The Queen Mother, the Duke of Guise, and others are conspiring to bring Huguenots to a wedding feast for what Guise describes as:

> A Massacre of Souls: methinks I see
> The glutton Death gorg'd with devouting Lives,
> And stretching o're the City his swoln bulk,
> As he would vomit up the Dead.

In particular, Guise is consumed with the urge to kill Admiral Coligny, the leading Huguenot, and ‘thrust my hungry Sword / In the curs'd Carcass of this Admiral’. Later in the play, when we learn that the planned assassination of Coligny has not been successful, Guise says he will hunt down Coligny and his family, ‘The old gray Sire, the Dam, and little Babes, / I'le take 'em all together in the Nest, / And pash 'em till they Sprawl.’ There are Shakespearean echoes here relating to the murder of Macduff’s family on Macbeth’s orders. This rich and violent language, drawing on metaphors of consumption, heightens the dramatic effect and enhances the anti-Catholic nature of the play which, as Lee writes in the Prologue, represents 'the most Bloody rage / That ever did Religious Fiends engage'. Strong language is also used by Coligny, who sees the Queen Mother as 'a canker-Queen within the Core' and 'a Serpent equal to the first'.[19]

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[14] Ibid., pp. 5, 26, 28, 34.

[15] Charles Blount, *An appeal from the country to the city, for the preservation of His Majesties person, liberty, property, and the Protestant religion* (London, 1679), pp. 2-6.

[16] Knights, *Politics and opinion*, p. 243.

[17] Nathaniel Lee, *The massacre of Paris* (London, 1690), ‘Prologue’.

[18] Some performances of *Doctor Faustus* are recorded. Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. ccxlvii.

Coligny represents the Protestant hero in this play and, as Streete has argued, his commitment to the cause is 'to the detriment of his property and liberty' and ultimately his life.[20] When asked by the king to lead forces against the Spanish Duke of Alba, Coligny embraces the opportunity to fight with 'He who so curses the Reform'd Religion.' When he is warned by a friend that the king and his mother may be a danger to him, he replies 'Why should I fear …. when the King Inclines his heart to the Reform'd Religion'. He adds that, if this proves to be dissimulation, 'I am contented for the Protestant Faith / Here to be hewn into a thousand pieces, / And made the Martyr of so good a Cause.'[21] His eventual martyrdom sharpens his Protestant heroism in this intensely anti-Catholic play.

Between the religious extremes of Guise and Coligny, the French king is seen from the start as being in a conflicted religious position, as his conscience is at odds with the political imperative defined by his mother and the Duke of Guise. The plot to massacre the Huguenots is already underway when the play begins, and the king is much troubled:

> O Mother, Mother,
> You have imbark'd me in a Sea of Blood;
> And sure so damnable an Enterprise
> Was never form'd by Man.

His mother bullies him back into line, but it is not long before he again shows his lack of resolve: 'O Mother, oh, what's this that rends my heart, / That rides my Nights, and clouds my Days with horror? / Is it not Conscience?' After a visitation from a spirit in Act Five, he tells his mother that the massacre must not proceed. She reassures him that the Church will bless the deed, and the Cardinal of Lorraine says that the visitation he saw was from the Devil in disguise. When the king leaves, the Cardinal shows his contrasting lack of Christian morality by showing surprise that the king is troubled by his conscience, which he clearly sees as somewhat ridiculous. At the end of the play when the massacre is underway, the king enters distraught and condemns his mother and Guise for their hypocrisy, 'Dost thou not blush to sail in Seas of ruin, / To hang the Flag of a Damn'd Pyrat forth, / Yet call thy bloody Bark the Christian Church?' In this speech, we hear the French king accuse the fervent Catholics in his court of undermining Christianity. As we will see later, this idea that Catholics are not true Christians lies at the heart of the anti-Catholic rhetoric of this period. The king also condemns Catholic masquerade in the final lines of the play: 'For ever damn to Hell those curs'd Designs / That with Religion's Face to ruin tend, / And go by Heav'n to reach the blackest end.'[22] At a time when the fever of the Plot was at its most intense, Lee brought this play to a polemical end by giving these strongly anti-Catholic lines to the king of a Catholic country.

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[19] Lee, *The massacre of Paris*, 'Prologue', pp. 9, 17-18, 49.
[20] Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 219.
[21] Lee, *The massacre of Paris*, pp. 27, 33.

***The Female Prelate*, Elkanah Settle, 1680.**

Amongst the playwrights of this period, Settle's anti-Catholic credentials were second to none, as he took a leading role in the organisation of the pope-burnings. These were some of the most vivid displays of public theatricality in the period, with a mock procession followed by the burning of an effigy of the pope. They were usually held on the anniversary of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth to celebrate the victory of Protestantism. The London events lasted all day and were attended by huge numbers of people. As Dryden and Lee wrote in the final lines of their play *Oedipus,* 'We know not what you can desire or hope, / To please you more, but burning of a Pope.'[23] Figure 4-2 shows the scale and theatricality of the event.

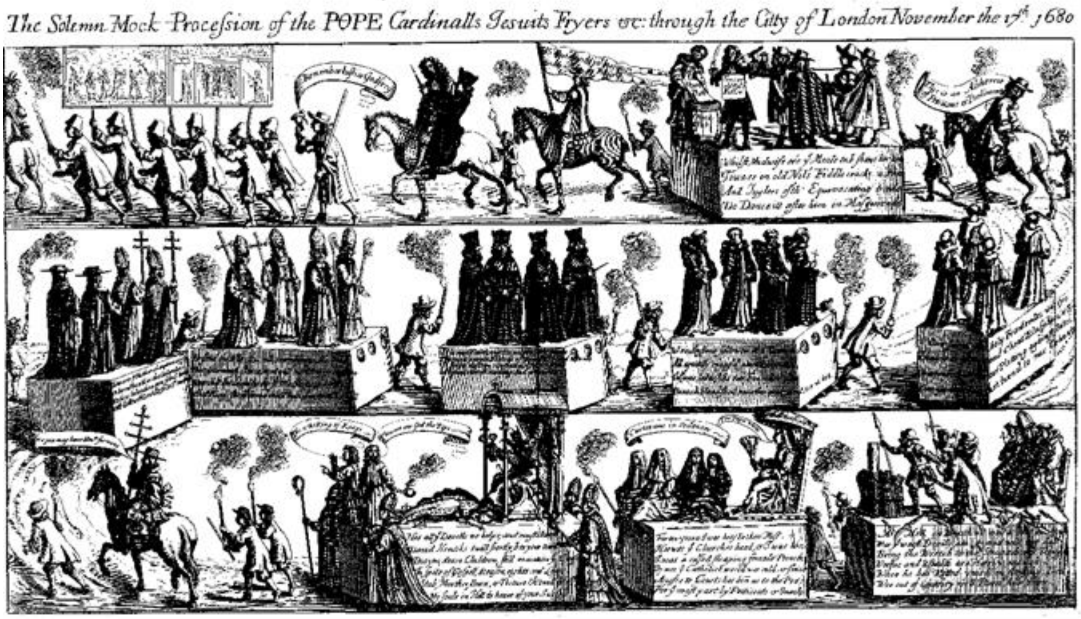
The Solemn Mock Procession of the POPE Cardinalls Jesuits Fryers &c: through the City of London November the 17th 1680

Figure 4-2: The Solemn mock procession of the Pope, cardinalls, Jesuits, fryers &c. through the city of London, 1680. After Francis Barlow, BM 1849,0315.69.

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[22] Ibid., pp. 7, 8, 41, 51-2.

[23] John Dryden and Nathaniel Lee, *Oedipus* (London, 1679), 'Epilogue'.

Settle's play *The Female Prelate*, his version of the legendary ninth-century female Pope, has been described by some scholars as the most fiercely anti-Catholic play of the period.[24] On the surface, this is clearly the case - there are two brief scenes involving the torture of 'heretics', and the Pope and the Cardinals see themselves as above the law.[25] I will argue, however, that the use of masquerade complicates this assessment, as Joanna becomes Pope despite not being a true Catholic, nor even perhaps a Christian.

In this play, the theme of masquerade reaches its apotheosis with the elevation to the papacy of a woman disguised as a man and dissembling as a priest. Once again, we witness a leading character operating in a world of masquerade. For example, the word 'false' appear eighteen times in the text; Amiran, a confidant of Joanna, spends the entire play disguising her gender as Joanna's page; and a double bed-trick is engineered to satisfy the lust of Joanna and her lover Lorenzo. The primary dissembler is, of course, Joanna herself. The audience learns that she had become an adulteress, a murderer, and a dissembler before the play even begins. As the play progresses, we see her resort to blatant lying, intense lasciviousness, and increasing violence. She has no redeeming features, and this character deserves to join the panoply of the great dramatic dissembling anti-heroes, such as Iago, Richard III, and Tartuffe.

Joanna's first disguise was adopted years before the play begins. She had been a lover of the old Duke of Saxony and, when she was spurned, she decided to return to his court to seek her revenge. She chose to do this disguised as a Benedictine monk, 'Thus mask'd and Shrowded in his borrowed Russet'. She became the Duke's confessor and eventually murdered him. She was able to maintain her disguise, both as a man and a cleric, even within the Church, and:

> Deceived the blinded world; for seven long years
> My Arts and Sex concealed: nay, and to heighten
> The miracle, I have lived an undiscovered Woman,
> Bred amongst Priests, high fed, hot-blooded Priests,
> ….
> Yet I've defyed their keenest eyes to track me.

Lorenzo is full of admiration and describes her as 'my dear mask'd Divinity'. When Joanna is chosen as pope, she is highly satisfied by her brilliant dissembling – 'How dost thou like the Port our Greatness bears, / Do we not play the Royal Masquerader nobly?'[26]

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[24] Don-John Dugas, 'Elkanah Settle, John Crowne and Nahum Tate' in Owen (ed), *A companion to Restoration drama*, p. 382; Hughes, *English drama*, p. 276.

[25] Owen, *Crisis*, pp. 141-2.

[26] Elkanah Settle, *The female prelate* (London, 1680), pp. 5, 25, 27.

There is another level of dissembling in this play, which is that Joanna is not a true Catholic, and probably not even a Christian. Owen argues that Joanna's religion is 'a fraud.' [27] As we saw in *The Excommunicated Prince*, the primary villain of the play is irreligious. An analysis of her religious position reveals an absence of commitment that borders on atheism, and her behaviour shows her to be a lurid example of a 'practical atheist' (to be explored in chapter 7). There is a mocking tone to the way she talks about the Catholic faithful – 'poor little unambitious Church men' - and their beliefs – 'the airy Dreams of Faith, Religion, Piety'. She is particularly scathing about those Catholics who leave money to the Church at the end of their lives – 'those / Dull pious dying fools, who in despair / To buy Eternity, make the Church their Heir.' Like Polidorus, she too is very happy to pocket the cash 'which we in Lust consume'. This highly derogatory attitude to the Catholic Church and its followers does not mean she is entirely without belief. Although she hardly mentions God, there are a few references to the Devil. Before the new pope is elected, Joanna offers a Faustian pact to become pope, 'Bring me some God, or what else power beside, / Some kinder Devil, but toth' Roman Chair, / And I am thy Slave for ever.' She clearly believes the pact is in place because, on two occasions later in the play, she calls on her 'Adored dear Devil' to save her from a dangerous situation. Also, when confronted by the ghost of the old Duke, she refers to him as 'This Messenger Of Hell'.[28]

The Catholic Church is, of course, more than the Pope, and the Cardinals also feature in this play. At the start they are seen as somewhat gullible by taking Joanna's side when she is accused by the young Duke of Saxony of killing his father, which she falsely denies. After Joanna has been elected as Pope, the Cardinals disappear from the play until the final scenes. When they reappear, they hear Saxony's denunciation of the pope as a murderer and as a woman. Once again, their reaction is to condemn the accuser and Saxony is led away to execution. When the Cardinals next appear, Joanna's infamous miscarriage in the street has occurred and they know the truth. They have discovered that she is a dissembler, a murderer, an adulteress, and a liar, but what concerns them most of all is that she is a woman. They immediately discuss how to ensure that only a man will sit on the papal throne, and they devise the idea of the genitals of the pope being checked in future by 'a reverend Matrons hand'. The built-in misogyny of this exclusion of women from the priesthood was not, of course, only a Catholic issue. Apart from a small number of female Quaker leaders, all religious authority in England at this time was held by men. There is another gender issue in this play. Joanna is a very strong personality and is elevated to a position of immense political power. In a soliloquy in the middle of the play, however, she sees that sexual power has made her a prisoner of ‘my old Domestick Jayler’. She identifies a paradox in her relationship with Lorenzo, ‘The very man, who when I stoop'd to make him / Slave to my Lust, at the same hour I made him / Lord of my Life’.[29] Even this supremely powerful woman is shown, in private, to feel subservient to a man.

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[27] Owen, *Crisis*, p. 142.

[28] Settle, *Prelate*, pp. 5, 47, 50, 55, 69.

Although the play is set centuries before the Reformation, Settle adopts the trope of the Protestant hero. The play contains few attractive characters, but our sympathies are directed towards the young Duke of Saxony and the imprisoned ‘heretics’, and they have many censorious things to say about the Catholic Church, drawing on imagery of violence and sexual excess – ‘th'adulterate Vatican’, ‘this Church Spawn; this Nest of Scarlet Tyrants’, and ‘nothing But Cruelty and Torments fill this place’. One of the heretics makes the point that heresy is seen by the Church as worse than ‘Whoredoms, Thefts, Rapes, Murders!’ Towards the end of the play, however, Saxony diverts his criticism from the papacy to its current incumbent – ‘Not that great Office, and the blessed Prelacy, / But the accurst Impostor that profanes it’.[30] This statement is clearly not anti-Catholic, but anti-Joanna. Saxony sees behind the masquerade and condemns the imposter, not the Church. Viewed through Saxony’s eyes, it is Joanna, rather than Catholicism, who deserves condemnation.

Joanna holds the position of the leader of the Catholic Church, and for many Protestants she would have been seen as a manifestation of the Church’s corruption. But I believe that Saxony’s personal criticism of Joanna rather than the Church, together with the ambiguity of her religious position, means that the anti-Catholic nature of the play is more nuanced. It rests to a large extent on accepting that Joanna’s behaviour reflects not just on her as an individual, but also on the Church. But, as her belief in that Church is nothing but a masquerade, this does not bear close examination. None of this would have been a surprise to Marvell who saw all Catholic priests as adopting ‘bold imposture …. under the name of Christianity.’[31]

The Spanish Fryar, John Dryden, 1680.

In contrast to the masquerading we have seen in this section, some Catholic characters in the plays made no attempt to cover up either their beliefs or their faults. Dryden’s portrayal of Father Dominic, the eponymous Spanish Fryar, is a vividly drawn character assassination. Dryden was a prolific poet, playwright, translator, and critic. He was a strong supporter of Charles II, particularly during the Succession Crisis, and was appointed Poet Laureate in 1668, a post he held until the Glorious Revolution. Although he would eventually convert to Catholicism (see section 6.1), he chose to ridicule a Catholic priest at the height of the Popish Plot.[32] Owen argues that Dryden 'made no attempt to pull back from anti-Catholicism' but she takes a more nuanced view about its anti-clericalism, which she sees as being questioned in the play.[33] I believe, however, that this play's anticlericalism is as significant as its anti-Catholicism and, perhaps, even more so. I see Father Dominic as one of the most intensely anticlerical portrayals in the drama of the period. The stereotypes that Dryden adopts for this character reflect those used by dramatists against clerics of all denominations, as we saw in the previous chapter and will see again in the next.

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[29] Ibid., pp. 33, 72.
[30] Ibid., pp. 20, 47, 68.
[31] Marvell, *An account of the growth of popery, and arbitrary government in England*, p. 5.

Everything about Dominic is given additional weight by his most conspicuous characteristic – his enormous physical size, which we can see in the portrait of the actor Anthony Leigh in the role (see Figure 4-3). Dominic's size implies gluttony, and we also see his hand in a cash box, indicating avarice. This portrait was created when the play was revived after the Glorious Revolution, by which time Dryden had converted to Catholicism.[34]

These anticlerical tropes are also clear from the text of the play. In the first scene we hear a description of Dominic before he appears and even before his name is mentioned. In this speech, Dryden weaves together anti-Catholic comments with the wider anticlerical tropes of gluttony and lechery:

> I met a reverend, fat, old, gouty Fryar;
> With a Paunch swoln so high, his double Chin
> Might rest upon't: A true Son of the Church;
> Fresh colour'd, and well thriven on his Trade,
> Come puffing with his greazy bald-pate Quire,
> And fumbling o'er his Beads, in such an Agony,
> He told 'em false for fear: About his Neck
> There hung a Wench; the Labell of his Function;
> Whom he shook off, i'faith, methought, unkindly.[35]

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[32] Paul Hammond, 'John Dryden', *ODNB Online*, 8108.

[33] Susan J. Owen, 'The politics of John Dryden's The Spanish fryar; or, The double discovery', *English: Journal of the English Association,* 43 (1994), pp. 97-113, p. 100; Owen, *Crisis*, p. 147.

[34]. Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. 371.

[35] John Dryden, *The Spanish fryar* (London, 1681), p. 3.

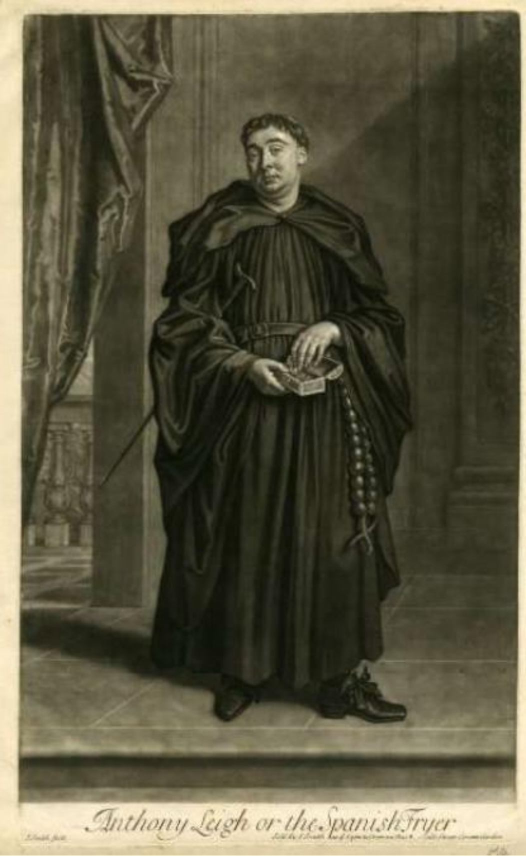
Anthony Leigh or the Spanish Fryer

Figure 4-3: Anthony Leigh or the Spanish Fryer, c 1690-1700.
After Sir Geoffrey Kneller, BM 1902,1011.4658.

The sense of Dominic’s immense physical size is also emphasised just before he first appears on stage, when the servant announcing his arrival says:

> There's a huge fat religious Gentleman coming up, Sir, he saies he's but a Fryar, but he's big enough to be a Pope; his Gills are as rosie as a Turkey Cock; his great Belly walks in state before him like an Harbinger; and his gouty Legs come limping after it: Never was such a Tun of Devotion seen.[36]

This metaphorical link between physical size and the Catholic hierarchy emphasises the trope of the priest as an embodiment of excess and indulgence. An earlier example of this trope can be seen in Thomas Middleton’s play *A Game at Chess*, in which one of the central characters is introduced as the ‘Fat-Blacke-Bishop’.[37] Drunkenness and avarice are then added to his characteristics as he imbibes a few drinks in swift succession and accepts a sizeable bribe from Lorenzo to deliver a letter to the object of his love, Elvira. Dominic is her confessor and is the only man her jealous husband Gomez will allow into her presence. Once he is with her, he takes on the role of what Collier described as ‘a pimp for Lorenzo’.[38] Like Scruple in *The Cheats*, Dominic uses casuistic arguments that undermine the sacrament of marriage. He tells Elvira that a marriage vow ‘is a very solemn thing: and ’tis good to keep it: —but, notwithstanding, it may be broken, upon some occasions.’ He asks her whether she has ‘striven with all your might against this frailty?’ She says she has, and he absolves her by saying that ‘when we have done our utmost, it extenuates the Sin.’ This sense of when-all-else-fails is emphasised later when Dominic tells her that ‘when the Spiritual means have been apply'd, and fails: in that case, the Carnal may be us'd.’[39]

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[36] Ibid., p. 21.
[37] Thomas Middleton, *A game at chess* (London, 1625), ‘Front matter’.

When we next meet Dominic he sees another fryar in the street only to discover that it is Lorenzo in disguise – ‘my noble Colonel in Metamorphosis!’ Lorenzo has decided to try to get access to Elvira dressed as a fryar. For him, the similarity between his disguise and Dominic’s normal attire is not just about their dress. One element of anticlericalism is the perception that the religion of clerics is sometimes only skin-deep, and Lorenzo emphasises Dominic’s hypocrisy by observing that ‘my holiness, like yours, is meer out-side.’ What is a temporary costume for Lorenzo is a fundamental and hypocritical disguise for Dominic. Lorenzo also generalizes the hypocrisy of clerical dress – ‘a Habit that in all Ages has been friendly to Fornication’. Lorenzo asks Dominic to go with him to Elvira. In a soliloquy before they arrive, Elvira declares that her conscience is not troubled by her impending adultery because Dominic ‘has given it a Dose of Church Opium, to lull it’, anticipating Marx’s famous quotation about religion. This metaphor of the cleric as drug-dealer reinforces the anticlericalism in this play. The subject of clerical disguise continues when Gomez returns to discover two fryars. Dominic dissembles outrage that Lorenzo has used ‘Holy Garments for a cover-shame of Lewdness’. Gomez counters that with the generalisation that ‘when a swindging Sin is to be committed, nothing will cover it so close as a Fryar's Hood’. Lorenzo decides it is time to leave as he shares the anticlerical view that priests are not to be trusted – ‘this is the old Church-trick, the Clergy is ever at the bottom of the Plot, but they are wise enough to slip their own Necks out of the Coller, and leave the Laity to be fairly hang'd for it’ - a line that brings us back to the Popish Plot. Gomez also joins the anticlerical attack by observing that when sins are divided ‘the Clergy puts in for nine parts, and scarce leaves the Laity a tythe.’ He dismisses Dominic with a line that reflects Collier’s comment – ‘I never knew what a Fryar was good for till your Pimping show'd me.’[40]

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[38] Collier, *A short view*, p. 98.

[39] Dryden, *The Spanish fryar*, pp. 26-7.

[40] Ibid., pp. 29, 30, 35-6.

In Act Four, Dominic tries to back out of any further help for Lorenzo because 'my Conscience will digest these gross Enormities no longer' – a metaphor that draws on Dominic's size and gluttony. Lorenzo's retort is that Dominic has digested pimping, perjury, and bribery, 'so why shouldst thou discourage Fornication', and he wins him back with another bribe. Dominic fails to get access to Elvira and then devises the idea of making a false accusation that Gomez was involved in the plot to kill the king, thus clearing the way for the lovers to elope. He uses casuistical arguments to justify such blatant dishonesty. False accusations were, of course, a prominent feature of the Popish Plot. Gomez is arrested as 'a Traitor; and for being in a Plot against the State.' At the end of the play, Dominic's activities are exposed and there are calls for him to be defrocked. His final line as he leaves the stage exemplifies the hypocrisy of the character and the anticlerical nature of the play - 'May your Sisters, Wives, and Daughters, be so naturally lewd, that they may have no occasion for a Devil to tempt, or a Fryar to pimp for 'em.'[41]

The lewdness, gluttony, deception, and hypocrisy of this character reflect the stereotypes of anticlericalism from across the denominations, which is why I believe that this is of greater significance in this play than its anti-Catholicism. Also, there is also an absence of any references to Catholic rituals or doctrine, in contrast to the Jesuits in *The Excommunicated Prince* and another anti-Catholic and anticlerical creation - Tegue in *The Lancashire Witches* (see chapter 8).

Irish witnesses and oaths

As Gomez says in *The Spanish Fryar*, 'if you want a thorough pac'd Lyar that will swear through thick and thin, commend me to a Fryar'.[42] This perception of Catholic mendacity was combined with ethnic prejudice to reflect the idea of the false Irish witness. At the height of the Crisis in 1681, a large number of Irish witnesses arrived in London. Although they were generally known to be perjurers, they were examined by the Council, but their accents made it very difficult for them to be understood. They were originally brought in by followers of Shaftesbury with the aim of reinforcing the belief that Catholics were dangerous but, as the balance of power shifted from the Whigs to the Tories in the summer of 1681, the allegiance of the witnesses also shifted. They saw greater gains to be made from admitting their earlier perjury and giving evidence in support of the government.[43] The activities of the Irish witnesses were well known at the time, as indicated in William Hetherington's pamphlet *The Irish-Evidence Convicted by Their Own Oaths.* Hetherington wrote,

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[41] Ibid., pp. 45-6, 49, 82.

[42] Ibid., p. 80.

[43] Kenneth Harold Dobson Haley, *The first Earl of Shaftesbury* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 575, 643.

> I Doubt not but the whole Nation is by this time sufficiently Alarm'd with the noise of the Irish Witnesses, and their Notorious Adventures, their Swearing, Counter-swearing, Quarrels amongst themselves, Suborning, and being Suborn'd, Endeavours to drop the Popish Plot, and Sham another upon Protestants, & c. are become the Common themes of every Table-talk, and the Subject matter of Play-House Drolls.[44]

One Play-House Droll who took up the issue in the following year was Crowne in his comedy *City Politiques* (discussed in section 3.2). In the final scene of the play, Florio is accused of hatching a plot to open the gates and let in the French. An Irish witness is brought in to swear that Florio has done this. He is, of course, a Catholic. He says 'I'le Shwear hesh a Knave and a Rascal, and a Traytor, and hash been in a Plot … To kill all the Town, and let in the French; yesh indeed.' Florio says he has never seen the Irishman before, and Dr Sanchy (the play's representation of Titus Oates) says he has seen them together forty times. Artall, who earlier in the play disguised himself as Florio, is then brought in under arrest and charged with the plot. When the Irish witness is asked to identify the real Florio, he answers that it is the one he was 'bid to shwear against.' When threatened with torture, he admits he has been bribed to swear false evidence.[45]

4.2 After the Glorious Revolution

As mentioned above, there were no new anti-Catholic plays during the reign of James II. This would change soon after the accession of William and Mary. *The Massacre of Paris* finally reached the stage in November 1689, having been banned when it was written in 1679 (see section 2.4). In the following year, a number of anti-Catholic plays were published, of which three will be examined here.

***The English Frier,* John Crowne, 1690.**

Crowne's political and religious allegiances shifted again when he wrote the first new anti-Catholic play of the reign, which reached the stage in March 1690. His anti-Catholicism reflects what Streete has described as ‘representative of an ascendant Whig ideology.’[46] Crowne’s play is an adaptation of *Tartuffe* and appears to be set during the reign of James II. When Lord Wiseman says that ‘I am very unwilling to pay respect to Priests and Fryers that abuse the Court and Nation’, Lord Stately replies that ‘they are great Favourites’ at Court. Also, the title character, Father Finicall, is said to have ‘great sway at Court’.[47] Both these statements would be anachronistic unless they incurred while James was on the throne. In the Prologue, Crowne warns of the dangers of a return of popery – ‘Truth is, if ever Priests return, they come / With all the Hunger, Rage, Revenge o' Rome’. He also reflects the view that some Tories are papists in disguise, and condemns them as: ‘they who once serv'd Priests, and still promote / France, Teague, and Jesuit, in their secret Vote; / And are so Mad, they'd give up Englands Glory, / Only to keep the wretched Name of Tory’.[48]

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[44] William Hetherington, *The Irish-evidence convicted by their own oaths* (London, 1682), p. 3.
[45] Crowne, *City politiques*, pp. 76-78.

This argument is given dramatic life in the first scene of the play. When Lord Stately, although a Protestant, is described as one who ‘serves Priests and Friers’, he says he despises popery. But he then issues an order to ‘ring the Bell to Prayers there’ and declares that ‘I'm very much for ceremony’. He also says, ‘I have a great interest with the Fryers, but especially with Father Finicall, a very pretty Father’. Finicall is a model of hypocrisy and deception, as would be expected in a version of Tartuffe. He talks of the ease with which he indulges in both, as well as admitting that stories told by priests in this world can never be tested until after death:

> My trade is a fine easy gainful cheat,
> How easy 'tis, Saintship to counterfeit;
> And pleasing fables to invent and spread;
> And fools ne're find the cheat, till they are dead.[49]

The trope that Catholics are not true Christians is amplified when Lady Pinch-gut’s servants describe her as ‘a damn'd Papistical Heathen. She's a Papist, Sir, but no Christian’, which would also be a good description of Pope Joanna. They also describe her priests as irreligious - ‘cunning Knaves; they have more Wit than to trouble themselves with Religion’ – and avaricious – ‘They'll have Religion for you, if you'll pay for't’. Finicall embodies this avarice as he is attempting to cheat Sir Thomas Credulous of his estate. But Sir Thomas is aware of this and, in his plot to expose Finicall, he dissimulates a religious conversion and says he will

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[46] Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 243.
[47] Crowne, *The English frier*, pp. 3, 13.
[48] Ibid., ‘Prologue’.
[49] Ibid., pp. 1, 13, 41.

'pretend I am a Convert, and sick and dying' – a deceptive deathbed conversion that is put to good use.[50] We will return to the issue of dubious deathbed conversions in chapter 7.

Lord Wiseman's description of Father Finicall adds licentiousness to the chargesheet – 'the lov'd, slick, wash'd, clean, comb'd, curl'd shock o' the Ladies … 'tis thought he lyes between their Sheets' and, in a later scene, we are shown clear evidence of this as he attempts to seduce Pansy, Lady Credulous's woman. His justification for 'carnal Communion' with Pansy leads him to confess the hypocrisy and deception not just of himself, but of the entire Catholic Church. His argument is that the ends justify the means and 'our frauds holy being for holy ends'. He talks of the 'holy Stratagem o' Priests … thereby religiously to deceive the world' and 'we Priests are forc'd to appear in many shapes'. He uses the metaphor of performance to show how their outward show conceals their frauds: 'And though like the Bearers o' my Lord-Mayors Pageant, we may have many a secret foul step, we must keep our Pageant pure, for that is seen, we are hid.'[51] There is a contrast here with *The Spanish Fryar*. In that play, Dominic uses casuistry to justify his statements and actions, but Finicall paints an explicit self-portrait of hypocrisy and irreligion.

When Sir Thomas tells the others of Finicall's deception and outlines the plan to trap him, he is so confident of success that he gambles his religion with the risk of a genuine conversion to Catholicism - if Finicall does not fall into the trap, 'I'le be of your Religion.' This throws Lady Credulous into confusion – 'Well if he does—I'le be—I'le be—I don't know what Religion I'le be of.' And Lord Stately extends the issue to a wider anticlericalism that would drive him to atheism – 'I finde all sorts o' Preists are such knaves, and so confound us, that I shall be of no Religion.' Sir Thomas's confidence is vindicated when they hide and overhear Finicall attempting to seduce Pansy, and also criticising them all. He describes Lady Credulous as gullible 'to believe all the simple stories we tell 'em' and Lady Pinchgut as 'a horrible Covetous wretch, we deceive her of her money'. He justifies cheating 'Lord Stately, and other Protestant fools' as a way of saving their souls – 'so we make 'em do some good; and are false to them, but sincere to our calling of Priesthood.'[52] This idea that deception is a job requirement for a priest substantiates the hypocrisy of the stage cleric.

The Folly of Priestcraft or *The Converts*, Anonymous, 1690.

This is a five-act comedy in prose, structured in the style of the time with the pursuit of love as its central plot. Although the play refers to Dryden's dismissal as Poet Laureate after the

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[50] Ibid., pp. 9, 26.
[51] Ibid., pp. 13, 50-51.
[52] Ibid., pp. 49, 51.

Revolution - ‘our cashier'd Laureat’ - everything else in the play situates it in the reign of James II. The leading Catholic character is Politico who, as his name suggests, likes to meddle in state affairs. He and his Catholic colleagues have influence at Court and they are still hoping that ‘the Penal Laws be taken away, to make room for Catholics’, which was expected to follow James II’s 1687 *Declaration of Indulgence*. But they are portrayed as ‘a Race of mumbling Bald-pate Friars’.[53] Anticlericalism is a strong theme in the play and, as mentioned above, it is the earliest extant printed text to include the word ‘priestcraft’ in its title.

Politico has a cunning plan to use non-Catholics to help build up the Catholic Church without them knowing it. He thinks this is an unusual plot – ‘These Hereticks are odd Tools to build up the Catholick Church withal’ – but it reflects the alliance between the Catholics at James II’s court with some nonconformists on the issue of religious toleration. The plurality of religion at this time is clear from the list of suggestions that Politico receives for who should be approached to help his plot. The satirical nature of this passage shows that the play’s anticlericalism goes much wider than the Catholics, including dredging up the Fifth Monarchists to represent the radical dissenting extreme. The suggestions are:

> Mr. Peaceable; he is rich and so great a Dissenter, that he scarce ever saw the inside of a Church in his Life …
> Mr. Greedy … one that professes great Love and Affection to the Establish'd Church …. covetous to the highest degree of Rapaciousness on one hand, and Sordility on the other …
> Mr. Zealous, of the Congregational Way …. But those that pretend to know him better, do say, that at most he is but an Atheist, and his whole Religion is Hypocrisy …
> Mr. Whyner …. is a Fellow of a broad Face, and no Brains, the want of which is supply'd by a large stock of Impudence, which enables him to rail against Popery in Billingsgate Language, without two grains of Sense or Reason …
> Ranter of those peaceable People called Quakers …
> Mr. Firebrand, a Fifth Monarchy Man, one of an implacable Temper, that in the late Times was very much prosecuted. He is esteemed very rich, but the most violent revengful ill-tempered Man in the whole Country.[54]

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[53] Anonymous, *The folly of priest-craft*, ‘Prologue’, pp. 3, 14.

[54] Ibid., p. 13.

The play does include one moderate Catholic – the appropriately named Mr Britain - who believes Politico is too zealous and continually tries to persuade him to be more moderate as he is concerned for the potential damage to the constitution. It is rare in the plays to see a sympathetic Catholic and a more complex picture of Catholicism, but Mr Britain provides an element of counterbalance.

Hypocrisy and disguise are everywhere, as the dramatist creates another example of a world of masquerade. Almost every character dissembles at some point in the play and many of them do so in disguise. Even the 'hero' Turnabout is riddled with hypocrisy. At the start of the play, he is in love with Leucasia, but she is resisting him. He believes he will improve his chances if he becomes a Catholic but bewails that there is already too much conversion going on - 'this changing a Man's Religion is a meer drug, 'tis grown too common.' As the play progresses, Leucasia starts to feel sorry for Turnabout and finds ways to rescue him from what she describes as the 'continual Drudgery of a whining Hypocrisy'. We hear that he is a frequenter of prostitutes and, because he is having to wait so long for Leucasia, he sees nothing wrong with a spot of fornication to pass the time. His behaviour with the priests is almost entirely dissembling – at one point he is concerned that he has 'over-acted the part of an Hypocrite'. Other examples of disguise in the play include two of the priests going to a coffee house in disguise to stage a false argument to convince onlookers to turn to Catholicism; Portico disguising himself, unconvincingly, to try to seduce Leucasia; Sir George Subtleman disguising himself as a hermit from America to test the honesty of his son; and Jonathan Simper, servant to Subtleman Jnr, is exposed as a woman in disguise. It is, of course, the Catholic priests who are portrayed as the biggest hypocrites - Subtleman Jnr describes Cautious as 'a covetous insatiable Rascal, endued with a large stock of Cunning and Hypocrisy'.[55]

Casuistry is used as an anti-Catholic weapon by showing it can be used to justify any desired course of action, going beyond the examples discussed in the early satires (section 3.1) and in *The Spanish Fryar* (section 4.1). In this case it is used to justify both fornication and murder. Three casuists appear at the end of Act Three and, when Subtleman asks whether it is acceptable for him to murder his father, one declares that:

> it is the evil malicious intention of the mind that is all in all. Now if Mr. Subtleman bear no malice to his Father, but does that Work in a spirit of Love

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[55] Ibid., pp. 1, 3, 8, 19.

> and Charity for the good of the Catholick Cause, there can be no evil in it; provided he gives all the Estate that accrues thereby, to the Church.[56]

One aspect of anticlericalism that is prominent in this play is the belief that priests should not meddle in politics. The Epilogue includes this passage:

> When Priests forsake the business of the State,
> And on the Duties of their Office wait,
> Expect the Issue of a prosperous fate.
> But when they steer the Helm, they hurry on
> A dismal Night of black confusion.'[57]

A similar point is also made in Dryden's 1689 play *Don Sebastian* (see section 6.1), demonstrating that attitudes of anticlericalism are not restricted to any single religious persuasion. This issue also reflects the debate about the relationship between the state and the church. The Restoration settlement had seen the church and state brought firmly together but, as Knights has argued, the pressures to pull them apart again had taken a step forward after the Indulgences of James II.[58] The idea that the state should no longer have a role in religious persecution was gaining ground at this time.

***The Late Revolution*, Anon, 1690.**

This anonymous pamphlet play is very different in style from *The Folly of Priestcraft*. It is a tragi-comedy and is written mostly in blank verse. The characters are not drawn in detail and show very little development through the play. It does not have a complexity of sub-plots and it tells just a single story - the events of the 1688 Revolution. As mentioned above, the title page of pamphlet plays reflects not the name of the theatre in which the play was first performed, but the dramatic setting of the play. Using the metaphor of politics as performance the title page of this play states - 'as it was acted throughout the English dominions in the year 1688' (see Figure 4-4).[59] The language in this play is heightened and there are some long descriptive speeches but, despite this, the plot has momentum. Almost every scene has news or rumours about the dramatic events of the year. Streete has emphasised the political uncertainty about William's regime at this time, and the playwright creates an atmosphere of tension and insecurity for both sides until the departure of James II and the victory of William of Orange.[60]

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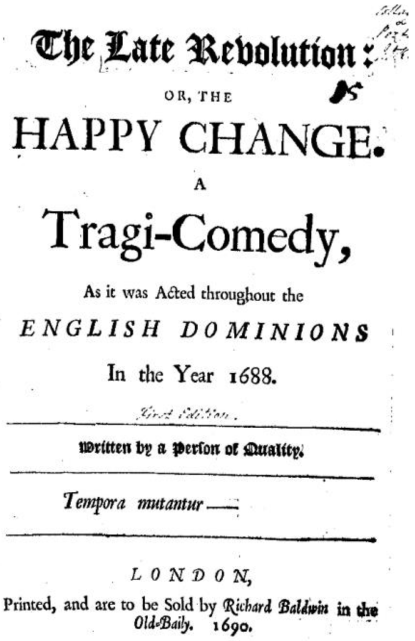
[56] Ibid., p. 34.
[57] Ibid., p. 64.
[58] Knights, '"Meer religion"', pp. 41-43.
[59] Anonymous, *The late revolution, or, The happy change a tragi-comedy* (London, 1690), title page.



The Late Revolution:
OR, THE
HAPPY CHANGE.
A
Tragi-Comedy,
As it was Acted throughout the
ENGLISH DOMINIONS
In the Year 1688.
First Edition.

Written by a Perſon of Quality.

Tempora mutantur —

LONDON,
Printed, and are to be Sold by *Richard Baldwin* in the *Old-Baily*. 1690.

Figure 4-4: *Title page of The Late Revolution*, 1690.

Streete argues that the play is ‘a direct political attack on prominent members of the old regime’ and this is clear from the leading Catholic in the play. His name is Father Peters, and this brings an unmistakable resonance with the Jesuit Sir Edward Petre, who was implicated in the Popish Plot and later became a privy councillor under James II.[61] The play is a powerful piece of anti-Catholic polemic, and its polemical nature is reflected in its heightened language. Like Politico, Father Peter’s hatred of ‘hereticks’ drives him to thoughts and plans of violence, similar to those articulated by the Duke of Guise in *The Massacre of Paris*:

> Kill all — the quickest method to convert ‘em
> Ravish the Wives—, dash out the poys’nous brains
> Of each young Heretick Viper at the Breast
> Rip up the Matrons, and each reverend sinner,
> Burn all the cursed Wasps in their stoln Hives

The language of the supporters of William is of a very different kind:

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[60] Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 247.
[61] Ibid., p. 245; Stuart Handley, ‘Sir Edward Petre’ in *ODNB Online*, 22046.

> How sweet is Liberty to free-born Minds?
> Sure we breath clearer air than e're his coming.
> All things look pleasant now in spite o'th' Season,
> Winter forgets itself and smiles anew.[62]

These contrasting moods of darkness and light continue throughout the play.

As in *The Folly of Priestcraft*, this play also gives us a picture of the religious plurality of the reign of James II. Early in the play, three citizens complain that business is down because the Court has 'grown wondrous Godly'.[63] Streete observes that it is not just the intensity of religion, but the negative effect on business of the lack of religious uniformity that is 'a common theme in drama of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.'[64] As well as this link between religion and business, a later scene involving the three citizens paints a vivid picture of the religious plurality at Court:

> I say, how great a Paradox soever it may seem, If a man has lost his religion, let him go to our Court to find it again. There's Religions of all sorts and sizes, complexions and humours; Cassocks and Cloaks, little Bands and concise Cravats piled almost one o'top o'tother.

The dramatist's use of clothing metaphors tells us from the start that we are unlikely to hear respectful descriptions of religious folk – and so it proves. Although the speech illustrates the extent of religious plurality, it creates a sense of strained co-existence. It continues with descriptions of various Protestant characters, some of whom have come to understand that their long-time religious opponents are not, perhaps, as bad as they believed.

> Look into one corner, you find a Quaker managing his Whites as if he had seen a Ghost; in another a Presbyterian, very gravely thinking what Answer to return to their Royal Humble Servant; in a third a Church-man stalking along as surly as a Lion, tho' he and Jack Presbyter me thought look'd a little more kindly on one another than they us'd to do, when they found neither of 'em had such Cloven Feet and terrible Horns as they used to be painted with.

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[62] Anonymous, *The late revolution*, pp. 15, 45.
[63] Ibid., p. 4.
[64] Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 246.

The citizen then turns his attention to the Jesuit, and the tone of the language changes, predictably, to a more derogatory kind, using words such as ‘sneaks’, ‘malicious’, and ‘sinful’:

> Aloof off from both, as if he was afraid they'd fall upon him, sneaks along some old lean malicious Dog of a Jesuit, whose care for propagating the Faith, and Mankind together, had wasted away two thirds of his sinful Carcase:

Although most Protestant groups shared an intolerance of Catholics, the final lines of the speech show that even that relationship is improving – not out of a kinder attitude, but from a growing belief that a degree of co-existence and civility would make life easier for everyone.

> And tho' he hated both as heartily as Calvin himself, yet knowing what necessity there was to be civil, and who sent for em, tips ‘em a gentle Leer, and looks as fawning on ‘em all, as tho they'd given him 50 Guinea's a piece to pray their Fathers Souls out of Purgatory’.[65]

This passage shows that religious zealotry may be being tempered by a sense of ‘what necessity there was to be civil’. This need for zealotry to give way to civility, and the discomfort many conformists felt about religious persecution, is stressed in another new play of 1690 – Settle’s *Distressed Innocence,* which will be examined in section 6.1. In this scene in *The Late Revolution*, however, the talk of civility and co-existence is expressed in a satirical tone. As Carys Brown has argued, the culture of politeness did not necessarily contribute to ‘the emergence of a “more polite” and socially affable religious culture’.[66] The scene gives the impression that the citizens feel there is just too much religion about, and that none of the religions on show are very appealing. This indicates that, in this play, there is an inherently negative attitude to all denominations and, perhaps, to religion itself.

4.3 The Hanoverian succession and Jacobite resistance

Anti-Catholicism did not go away for the rest of the late-Stuart age, but there were fewer references to it in the plays of that period. Although war with Louis XIV’s France was a major event in this period, the situation was complicated by European politics. The Grand Alliance against France included some Catholic nations and, most significantly, the Papal States and, as

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[65] Anonymous, *The late revolution*, pp. 17-18.

[66] Carys Brown, 'Politeness, Hypocrisy and Protestant Dissent in England after the Toleration Act.', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 41 (2018), pp. 61-80, p. 61.

Pincus has argued, this was not a war of religion.[67] This could have made the dramatists reluctant to attack Catholics at this time, together with the challenge of dealing with such complex politics in a dramatic way. The Hanoverian succession, and the Jacobite resistance that followed, however, provided the context for a return to the issue in the two new plays examined here.

Lady Jane Gray, Nicholas Rowe, 1715.

The issue of the complexities of royal succession that was mentioned at the start of this chapter, in connection with anti-Catholic plays written at times of tension, is pertinent to the first play examined here, which also draws on historical memory. When he was dying, Edward VI named Lady Jane Grey as his Protestant successor and she 'reigned' for nine days in 1553 before the Catholic Mary Tudor took the throne. Jane was subsequently convicted of high treason and beheaded. This conflict between an 'appointed' Protestant monarch and a more direct, but Catholic, descendant of a recent king had its parallels with the Hanoverian succession, although the outcome in 1714 was the opposite to 1553. This was clearly understood at the time, and Jean Marsden reports that there was 'a near obsessive interest in Lady Jane during the years 1714 and 1715 ... her figure appears again and again on stage and in print.'[68] Nicholas Rowe jumped on this bandwagon in his tragedy *Lady Jane Gray*. Rowe was a devout Whig and was appointed as Poet Laureate in 1715. He is best known for his work on Shakespeare's plays. Rowe was a popular figure in the literary world of his time and was buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.[69] In this play, he adopts the trope of the Protestant heroine and martyr, making the usual contrast with the dangerous Catholic characters. When Jane first appears on stage as Edward is dying, she is greeted by a speech by her future husband, Guilford Dudley, that is full of idealised imagery:

> Hail Princely Maid! who with auspicious Beauty,
> Chear'st every drooping Heart in this sad Place;
> Who, like the Silver Regent of the Night,
> Lift'st up thy sacred Beams upon the Land,
> To bid the Gloom look gay, dispell our Horrors,
> And make us less lament the setting Sun.[70]

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[67] A. M. Claydon, *William III* (London, 2002), pp. 139-140; Pincus, *1688*, p. 345.

[68] Jean I. Marsden, 'Sex, politics, and she-tragedy: Reconfiguring Lady Jane Grey', *Studies in English Literature, 1500 - 1900,* 42 (2002), pp. 501-22, p. 505.

[69] Arthur Sherbo, 'Nicholas Rowe' in *ODNB Online*, 24203.

[70] Nicholas Rowe, *Lady Jane Gray* (London, 1715), p. 9.

As we saw in *The Late Revolution,* the contrast between the language of light and dark is used to polemical effect. Streete sees this play as a warning against a rejection of the Williamite settlement that would ‘allow popery in by the back door’,[71] and this fear is reflected in two passages that describe the darkness that awaits the nation if Catholicism returns:

> Pride, Ignorance, and Rapine shall return;
> Blind bloody Zeal, and cruel Priestly Power
> Shall scourge the Land for ten dark Ages more.

and

> Our Towns shall glow with unextinguish'd Fires;
> Our Youth on Racks shall stretch their Crackling Bones;
> Our Babes shall sprawl on Consecrated Spears;
> Matrons and Husbands, with their New-born Infants,
> Shall burn promiscuous; a continu'd Peal
> Of Lamentations, Groans and Shrieks shall sound
> Through all our purple Ways.[72]

These speeches are made, of course, by the Protestant characters in the play, who were opponents of Mary Tudor. Towards the end of the play, however, we hear from Pembroke, one of Mary’s supporters, who condemns the dishonesty of Bishop Gardiner in language that is laced with anticlericalism, ‘Where shall we seek for Truth, when ev'n Religion, / The Priestly Robe and miter'd Head disclaim it? / But thus bad Men dishonour the best Cause’. He goes on to explain that the Catholic Church has acquired its negative reputation through the doctrines and actions of its leading prelates:

> I tell thee, Winchester, Doctrines like thine
> Have stain'd our holy Church with greater Infamy
> Than all your Eloquence can wipe away.
> Hence 'tis, that those who differ from our Faith
> Brand us with Breach of Oaths, with Persecution,
> With Tyranny o'er Conscience, and proclaim
> Our scarlet Prelates Men that thirst for Blood,
> And Christian Rome more cruel than the Pagan.

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[71] Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 250.
[72] Rowe, *Lady Jane Gray*, pp. 1, 34.

The polemical purpose of the play is made clear in the final couplet of the epilogue – ‘If you are taught to dread a Popish Reign, / Our Beauteous Patriot has not dy'd in vain.’[73] Rowe was congratulated by Centlivre, one of his contemporary dramatists, for succeeding in this purpose as he ‘set the Cruelties of Rome in so true a Light, that a great Part of our Clergy may blush to see the Stage become a better Advocate for Protestantism than the Pulpit’.[74] In the same year as Rowe’s play, Centlivre also wrote a play attacking Catholicism, to which we now turn.

A Wife Well Manag’d, Susanna Centlivre, 1715.

This play was first printed in 1715 but was not performed until 1724.[75] In the dedication to her play *The Humours of Elections*, she explained that *A Wife Well Manag’d* was initially banned because ‘it was said there would be Offence taken at the exposing a Popish Priest.’ Centlivre was, understandably, annoyed at this decision – ‘Good God! To what sort of People are we chang'd!’[76] *A Wife Well Manag’d* is a short and simple play that follows the trope of the lascivious Catholic priest and has a plot that depends on the use of a clerical disguise. At the start of the play, Lady Pisalto declares to her maid Inis that she loves her Catholic confessor Father Bernardo ‘to distraction’ but doesn’t know whether and how to tell him. Inis has the answers - ‘tho' Priests are forbid to marry, as a mortal Sin, Fornication was never reckon'd more than Venial … Write to him Madam, write to him.’ When Bernardo first enters, he tells us that he has been dreaming of being in bed with Lady Pisalto and that ‘she's a delicious Morsel.’ Don Pisalto, who has intercepted his wife’s letter, visits her disguised as Father Bernardo. She declares her love for him, but then he beats her ‘to cool the raging Feaver in your Blood.’[77] The real Bernardo visits her later when she is asleep and kisses her. She wakes, rejects him, and she and Inis beat him. Don Pisalto, who has overheard the scene, expels Bernardo and then reveals that he has read the letter. His wife asks forgiveness and he says that she should never see Bernardo again.

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These three groups of plays provide examples of the multivalency of anti-Catholic prejudice, as defined by Gheeraert-Graffeuille and Vaughan. *The Excommunicated Prince* gives a clear example of constitutional anti-Catholicism, and also demonstrates ethnic prejudice by making the claim that true Protestantism is best found in England. Ethnic prejudice is also evidenced against the Irish in *City Politiques,* and this will be taken to an extreme form in the character of

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[73] Ibid., pp. 58, 67.
[74] Centlivre, *The humours of elections*, p. 22.
[75] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. 763.
[76] Centlivre, *The humours of elections*, p. 9.
[77] Susanna Centlivre, *A wife well manag'd* (London, 1715), pp. 2-3, 7, 12.

Tegue O Divelly in *The Lancashire Witches* (see chapter 8). *City Politiques* also shows the ethnic prejudice against the French, which was emphasised in *The Massacre of Paris.* All the plays in the chapter reflect anti-popery although, as we have seen, this is often combined with a wider sense of anti-clericalism. The hypocrisy and immorality of Fryar Dominic and Father Bernardo reflect similar portrayals of nonconformists seen in chapter 3, and neither Pope Joanna nor Father Finicall show any commitment to their apparent religion. Anti-Catholicism is often sharpened by using the image of the Jesuit. We saw in chapter 3 how nonconformists were often depicted as Jesuits in disguise and the original conspirators in the fabricated Popish Plot were described as Jesuits. In this chapter we have seen conspiring Jesuits in *The Excommunicating Prince* and the plotting Catholic in *The Late Revolution* being modelled on the Jesuit Sir Edward Petre. As in the plays explored in chapter 3, the use of disguise is everywhere in the plays in this chapter, with Pope Joanna providing the most extraordinary example.

These plays contain many warnings that Catholicism was religiously corrupt and politically dangerous, but we have seen some nuances. A conflict of conscience was seen in the French King Charles in *The Massacre of Paris* and *The Folly of Priestcraft* showed us a moderate Catholic in Mr Britain. Both these characters expressed their concerns about the extreme form of the political conspiracies by the other Catholics around them. This provided a conspicuous contrast that served to heighten the anti-Catholicism. This use of contrast to emphasise negativity was also achieved through the trope of the Protestant hero. Most of these plays contained such characters, either explicitly or through allegory, as in the case of Saxony in *The Female Prelate.* The contrast was also affected through the use of dark and light language, as we saw in *The Late Revolution* and *Lady Jane Gray. The Late Revolution* and *The Folly of Priestcraft,* while being fundamentally anti-Catholic, also provided examples of the changing attitude to religious toleration and co-existence. Despite these nuances, Catholicism in these plays is mostly portrayed as a negative religious force, as nonconformity was in most of the plays in chapter 3. The next chapter will explore whether the same applies to the plays that engage with the adherents and clerics of the Church of England.

5 THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The restoration of the episcopal Church of England in 1660 made it the established church of the nation. The dramatists' negative portrayals of nonconformity and Catholicism in the previous two chapters could be seen as polemical attacks on the religious opponents of the establishment and, up to a point, they were. But the Church of England and its ministers also get the attention of the dramatists – and not in a positive way. There is, however, a difference of emphasis. Many of the plays referenced in the previous two chapters have included negative portrayals of religious characters who are central to the plot and are prominent on stage, including Scruple in *The Cheats,* Sir Patient Fancy, Mr Turbulent, Podesta in *City Politiques*, Noddy in *the Devil of a Wife,* Pope Joanna in *The Female Prelate,* Dominic in *The Spanish Fryar* and Finicall in *The English Frier.* In this chapter we will see two such characters – Chaplain Bull in *The Relapse* and Doctor Wolf in *The Non-Juror.* Although this is a smaller number of prominent characters, there are briefer appearances of smaller such characters and many references to the disreputable behaviour of conformist clerics – evidence that the dramatists saw the conformists as equally fair game.[1] My argument is that the purpose of the dramatists was not simply to carry out the polemical needs of the Church of England - religious characters were under attack, whatever their denomination, and we will see in chapter 6 that this also extended beyond Christianity. This all-encompassing perspective shows that there is a wider attitude towards religion in general at work in the plays of the period.

The first section of this chapter will show how hypocrisy was exposed in lay and clerical conformists, including a short sub-section on relevant issues relating to attitudes to marriage. Next, the plays provoked by the Non-Juror schism will be examined and, finally, the conflict between the High and Low churches will be explored through one play centred on the Bangorian Controversy.

5.1 Hypocritical conformists

The trope of the nonconformist or the Catholic as a lascivious, drunken, gluttonous, dissembling hypocrite was exhaustively followed by the dramatists, but rarely do the plays present the mirror image - the noble, honest, abstemious conformist. Kinglove in *The Royalist* is the exception (see section 3.2). Although there are fewer attacks on conformists, this section will show that there are some – both clerics and amongst the laity – and the same tropes are used to denigrate them.

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[1] Seventeen plays are referenced in this chapter compared to twenty-two in chapter 3 and nine in chapter 4.

The laity

The attacks on the nonconformists in *The Cutter of Coleman Street* were examined in section 3.1, but hypocrisy in this play is not confined to them. Colonel Jolly is a royalist whose estates were sequestered, and he is also portrayed as a religious hypocrite. Montague Summers sees him as one of the 'rag-tag of the King's party'.[2] His neglect of religion is clear when he asks for a prayer book and his daughter, Aurelia, tells him that it is 'all mouldy, I must wipe it first.' Jolly has two aims in the play. The first is to bring about the marriage of his ward in such a way that he can keep her substantial marriage portion. The second is to recover his sequestered estates by marrying the widow of the Puritan who acquired them – 'Collonel Fear-the Lord-Barebottle, a Saint and a Sope-boyler'. But the widow will only marry him if he converts to her religion. He dissembles conversion but finds it exhausting – 'a damn'd constraint and drudgery me-thinks, this Dissimulation'. Aurelia warns him not to marry the widow because, if the king returns, he will look foolish to have married a soap-boiler's widow. He answers that, if that happens, the 'Bishops will come in too, and she'l away to New-England'.[3] This portrayal earned Cowley some criticism, so he included a fierce defence of his loyalty in the prologue to the printed edition, (although it is not hard to see that his critics had a point):

> The first clamour which some malicious persons raised, and made a great noise with, was, That it was a piece intended for abuse and Satyre against the Kings party. Good God! Against the Kings party? After having served it twenty years during all the time of their misfortunes and afflictions, I must be a very rash and imprudent person if I chose out that of their Restitution to begin a Quarrel with them.[4]

Another portrayal of a lay conforming hypocrite can be seen in *Sir Patient Fancy* (examined in section 3.2). Lady Fancy is the closest the play has to a representative of the Church of England, but she does not serve it well. She is an adulteress and a self-confessed dissembler who has only married Sir Patient for his money. She criticises Sir Patient's religion as being nothing more than 'his Rebellious opinion …. and Contradiction', but she revels in deception herself as it is 'the best cloak I can put on to cheat him with.' Her lover Wittmore's response is to praise her as 'my fair Hypocrite.'[5] The underlying themes of hypocrisy and deception find their apotheosis in Lady Fancy – a dissembling cheat accusing religious hypocrites of pretence.

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[2] Montague Summers, *The playhouse of Pepys* (New York, 1964), p. 227.

[3] Cowley, *Cutter*, pp. 5-6, 23, 28, 32.

[4] Ibid., 'Preface'.

[5] Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy*, p. 14.

In *The Roundheads* (examined in section 3.2), we saw Lady Desborough spurning the attentions of Ananias Gogle. Later in the scene she changes tack. She decides Gogle can be useful and turns to blackmail – she will not report his lascivious hypocritical behaviour if he will spring her lover from prison and bring him to her. We already know that Lady Desborough is a closet royalist - her lover Freeman has told us that she 'feigns' nonconformity – and she gives such an effective pretence of religion that her husband believes she can be trusted with a Cavalier because she 'goes to a Conventicle twice a day, besides long Prayers and lowd Psalm-singing'. Lady Desborough says to Gogle 'for know, Sir, I am as great an Hypocrite as you, and know the Cheats of your Religion too; and since we know one another, 'tis like we shall be true.'[6] As we saw in *Sir Patient Fancy*, when it comes to dissembling and hypocrisy, dissenters can sometimes be outclassed by their religious opponents.

In section 3.4 we saw two lay conformists whose behaviour was shown in a very negative light – Arabella in *The Fair Quaker of Deal* and Lady Worthy in *The Humours of Elections.* The contrast is emphasised in both cases by placing these characters in opposition to sympathetically portrayed nonconformists.

Conforming clergy

Anticlericalism is indiscriminate in the plays of the period and the clergy of the Church of England do not escape censure. The nature of this criticism is similar to that used against the nonconformists and the Catholics, and there are two examples in plays by William Wycherley. Wycherley was one of the Court Wits and, as a lifelong Francophile, his writing was influenced by French sources. His religious position changed during his life. When living in France as a young man, he became a Catholic. At Oxford, under the influence of the Calvinist Thomas Barlow, he became a Protestant but, by the time of his death, he had once again become a Catholic.[7] In Wycherley's *The Country Wife* (1675), Harcourt disguises himself as a parson to gain access to Alithea, whose maid observes that he has 'the Canonical smirk, and the filthy, clammy palm of a Chaplain.'[8] In *The Gentleman Dancing-Master* (1673), Don Diego, an old rich Spanish Merchant, portrays the clergy as sexually untrustworthy. He says that 'we are bold enough in trusting them with our Souls, I'le never trust 'em with the body of my Daughter'. He keeps his daughter locked up at home and she is desperate for male company. She tells her maid that she would even be prepared to take the most extreme action to remedy the situation, and that is to go to church – 'Nay, not suffer'd to go to Church, because the men are sometimes there! little did I think I should ever have long'd to go to Church!'[9]

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[6] Behn, *The Roundheads*, pp. 4, 18, 31.
[7] Kate Bennett, 'William Wycherley' in *ODNB Online*, 30120.
[8] Wycherley, *The country wife*, p. 56.

This parental concern can also be seen in Durfey's *The Marriage-Hater Match'd* (1692). Lady Bumsiddle says 'if she were my Daughter, I had as lieve trust her with a Dragoon as a Parson'.[10] In John Lacy's *The Dumb Lady* (1669) the parson Othentick is asked whether he can take part in a deception 'and steal to your Text again without scruple of conscience?' Othentick agrees on the basis that he will do anything for a member of his family or if there is a good living on offer.[11] In John Vanbrugh's *The Relapse* (1697), Chaplain Bull is accused of the full range of anticlerical tropes:

> For as Chaplains now go, 'tis probable he eats three pound of Beef to the reading of one Chapter---This gives him Carnal desires, he wants Money, Preferment, Wine, a Whore; therefore we must Invite him to Supper, give him fat Capons, Sack and Sugar, a Purse of Gold, and a plump Sister.[12]

Thomas Shadwell was well-known for his nonconformist sympathies, so it not surprising to see conforming clerics coming under attack from his pen. In *The Humourists* (1671) he gives the Anglican parson a constant stream of complex and obscure language which has the effect of making him look ridiculous throughout the play and he is condemned by one of the other characters as a 'Fustian rascal.'[13] To drive home the point, Shadwell gives him the name Sneake. In *The Squire of Alsatia*, Shadwell portrays the Alsatian Divine as hypocritical and gluttonous - 'tappes'd in some Ale-house, Bawdy-house, or Brandy shop…. He's a brave swinging Orthodox'.[14]

Marriage

As mentioned in the Introduction, anticlericalism was often manifested through the attitude of the clergy to marriage. Most of these examples are about conforming clergy, who rarely offer any defence of the institution for which they are responsible. Other characters attack not only marriage, but also the Church's role in it, which is sometimes described as being entirely mercenary. Marriage is described as 'that Ecclesiastical Mouse-Trap' and 'Church-Mouth-Glue' and as a trick: ‘the locking of a Man to a Woman in Marriage, or in a Pue in a Church, are onely a couple of Church-tricks to get Money’, and ‘a Pox of this tying Man and Woman Together, for better, for worse! Upon my Conscience, It was but a trick that the Clergy might have A feeling in the Cause.’[15]

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[9] Wycherley, *The gentleman dancing-master*, pp. 2, 22.
[10] Thomas Durfey, *The marriage-hater match'd* (London, 1692), p. 12.
[11] John Lacy, *The dumb lady* (London, 1672), p. 65.
[12] John Vanbrugh, *The relapse* (London, 1697), p. 89.
[13] Thomas Shadwell, *The humorists* (London, 1671), p. 59.
[14] Shadwell, *The squire of Alsatia*, p. 72.

The clerical characters often have a very lackadaisical attitude to their marriage duties. This includes being willing to carry out clandestine marriages – marriages which, though carried out by a conforming cleric, were not in accordance with all the requirements of canon law. In John Gay’s comedy *The Wife of Bath* (1713) the cleric Hubert acquiesces to a father’s demand that he should quickly marry two reluctant young people and ‘Nick them slabdash with the ceremony.’[16] In *The Squire of Alsatia* it is said that the Alsatian Divine ‘will Marry any Couple at any time; he defies License, and Canonical Hours, and all those foolish Ceremonies.’ When the moment of the ceremony arrives, he acquiesces to the request to ‘come presently to the joyning of hands, and leave out the rest of the Formalities.’[17] In some plays, parsons find it easier to ignore canon law if they are bribed. In the anonymous *The Cornish Comedy* (1696) the parson, once he has been bribed, pretends his watch is fast and carries out a marriage after the canonical hour.[18] These examples of clerics who are shown to have a lax attitude to marriage ceremonies were not without some basis in the real world and this would have been recognisable to theatre audiences. London was not only the centre for theatre in this period - it was also where most clandestine marriages were carried out. The chapel in the Fleet prison, a short walk from the theatres, was a particularly busy venue for clandestine marriages, despite their dubious legal status.[19] In his examination of clandestine marriages, Lawrence Stone argued that ‘the behaviour of the officiating clergyman and the nature of the surroundings were both often extremely squalid.’ In three out of his ten case studies of valid clandestine marriages, the ministers are described as drunk, disreputable or pathetic.[20] Poverty was a driver for much of this conduct. R. B. Outhwaite identified an ‘abundance of “strolling priests”, “beggarly curates” and “hedge parsons”, prepared to couple young people for the price of a drink or a tavern dinner.’[21]

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[15] Thomas Shadwell, *Epsom wells* (London, 1673), p. 14; Crowne, *City politiques*, pp. 7, 14; George Etherege, *She wou'd if she cou'd* (London, 1671), p. 5.

[16] John Gay, *The wife of Bath* (London, 1713), p. 41.

[17] Shadwell, *The squire of Alsatia*, pp. 72, 78.

[18] Anonymous, *The Cornish comedy* (London, 1696), p. 24.

[19] Rebecca Probert, *Marriage law and practice in the long eighteenth century: A reassessment* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 176-183.

[20] Lawrence Stone, *Uncertain unions : marriage in England, 1660-1753* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 24, 119, 153, 181.

[21] R. B. Outhwaite, *Clandestine marriage in England, 1500-1850* (London, 1995), p. 63.

As well as clandestine marriages, the plays also include many tricked, invalid, and mock marriages. Gellert Alleman's careful legal analysis of marriages in the plays of the period records eighty-eight tricked marriages, of which almost half were not legally valid. He also records thirty-four mock marriages, the majority of which weren't valid.[22] Disguise plays a crucial role in most of the mock weddings. This usually takes the form of one of the characters putting on the disguise of a clergyman, described in one play as 'pious masquerade'.[23] This both aids the development of the plot as well as emphasising the perceived hypocrisy of the clerical figure. Thomas Scott went as far as giving his play the title of *The Mock Marriage* (1695) during which the clerical disguise is adopted by 'Mr. Wilmot's Man Roger.'[24] These dubious weddings help to heighten the drama as well as unsettling the whole idea of marriage. At the denouement of *The Marriage-Hater Match'd*, we are treated to the glorious entanglement of the mock marriage planned by the Hater being turned into a tricked marriage at his expense.[25]

Bigamy was not uncommon in early modern England, even amongst clerics, and this is also reflected in the plays.[26] In *The Relapse*, Chaplain Bull has no problem with bigamy if it is for 'the Peace of the Spirit'. Even if it is committed for what he calls the 'satisfaction of the Flesh', he sees this as no more than the 'sin of exhorbitancy', and it is reported that Bull had said that bigamy was no more than a 'Peckadilla'.[27] In *The Cutter of Coleman Street* the 'little fuddling Deacon' Soaker is described as someone who would be willing to carry out a bigamous marriage for five pounds.[28] Ideas about polygamy and concubinage were also undergoing debate during the period. John Cairncross argues that 'between about 1680 and 1750 the campaign for polygamy was in full swing'.[29] Even within the Church, such views were being expressed. In the same year that *The Relapse* was published, John Butler, a minister in the Church of England, published his argument for polygamy, or what he called 'Lawful Concubinage in a CASE of Necessity: Wherein Lawful Marriage conveniently, or possibly cannot be obtained.'[30] Such views had been expressed for some time in England and had even been reflected in high politics. During the Succession Crisis, ideas such as polygamy were seen by some as a way of enabling Charles II to father an heir with a second wife, or to legitimise his eldest illegitimate son, the Duke of Monmouth.[31] Such attitudes show that, for some, the sanctity of marriage could be overridden by political necessity, and that the king was not expected to set an example in respect of marriage - as indeed he did not in the case of sexual propriety.

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[22] Gellert Spencer Alleman, '*Matrimonial law and the materials of restoration comedy*' (PhD thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1942), pp. 93-105.

[23] Shadwell, *The fair Quaker of Deal*, p. 60.

[24] Thomas Scott, *The mock marriage* (London, 1696), p. 59.

[25] Durfey, *The marriage-hater match'd*, pp. 51-2.

[26] Bernard Capp, 'Bigamous marriage in early modern England', *The Historical Journal,* 52 (2009), pp. 537-56, pp. 538, 546; Stone, *Uncertain unions*, p. 232.

[27] Vanbrugh, *The relapse*, pp. 86, 96.

[28] Cowley, *Cutter*, pp. 'The Persons', 32.

[29] Quoted in Knights, *The devil in disguise*, p. 133.

[30] John Butler, *The true state of the case of John Butler, B.D., a minister of the true Church of England* (London, 1697), title page.

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This section has shown that the tropes used in the criticism of nonconformists and Catholics were also turned towards the conformists - Colonel Jolly is a religious hypocrite determined to cheat his ward, Lady Fancy is an adulteress and a self-confessed dissembler, and Lady Desborough is a dissembling blackmailer. There is also a consistent attack on the hypocrisy of conforming clerics. We will see in chapter 8 how Shadwell creates the ultimate hypocritical conformist cleric in the lascivious hypocrite Smerk. The mask of hypocrisy would appear to fit the conformist as well as the dissenter.

5.2 The Non-Juror schism

As mentioned in the Introduction, the clergy who were not willing to swear an oath to William and Mary, and were cast out of the Church of England, were known as the Non-Jurors. Although the dramatists engaged with the politics of Jacobitism in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, they paid little attention to the Non-Jurors until 1698. One of the most prominent Non-Jurors was Jeremy Collier, and it is likely that his assault on the stage was a major factor in the timing of the dramatists' attacks on the Non-Jurors. This factor also explains why some of the plays either refer to Collier or include thinly disguised portrayals of him. For example, in *The Fine Lady's Airs* (1708) by Thomas Baker, we hear a description of Major Bramble as 'a factious, seditious old Rogue, that's neither Whig, nor Tory, but an Enemy to his own Country' and his 'Bosom Friends' include 'Nonjurors that won't swear to the Government'. Bramble expands on his list of reprobate friends which includes 'Eleven Jacobite, Outlaw'd-Parsons.' Collier was not the only outlawed Non-Juror, but he is clearly the target here. Baker attacks the Non-Jurors through Bramble's association with them, portraying Bramble as someone who would rather 'see a Mastiff tear a Bull by the Throat' than go to the theatre, boasts to 'have frighted a High-Priest into Quakerism', and determines to 'muster up more Lies than are told behind a Cheapside-Counter'.[32]

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[31] Dabhoiwala, *The origins of sex*, pp. 103, 220; Knights, *The devil in disguise*, p. 133; Mark Goldie, 'Contextualizing Dryden's Absalom: William Lawrence, the laws of marriage, and the case for King Monmouth' in Donna B. Hamilton and Richard Strier (ed), *Religion, literature, and politics in post-reformation England, 1540-1688* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 209-11.

[32] Thomas Baker, *The fine lady's airs* (London, 1708), pp. 16-17, 21, 39.

The Stage-Beaux Toss'd in a blanket: or, Hypocrisie Alamode; Expos'd in a True Picture of Jerry ----- a Pretending Scourge to the English Stage, Tom Brown, 1704.

Tom Brown lived a life that was both licentious and bookish. He was a prolific writer in many genres, including much satirical work which was often aimed at specific targets, notably Dryden. He was a lifelong friend and collaborator of Aphra Behn and is buried next to her in Westminster Abbey.[33] Collier is referenced in a variety of ways throughout this play, including in its title.[34] In the Dedication he is mentioned by name as the 'Modern Enemy' of the stage.[35] In his footnotes to the Prologue, Brown attacks Collier for what was seen by many as his greatest hypocrisy – to criticise those who attack the Church whilst, as a Non-Juror, using words and actions which undermine the unity of the Church:

> he wisely insinuates the Sincerity of his Zeal for maintaining of Religion, and is urging the Care the State ought to take of its Preservation, when he is undermining the Religion establish'd in his country, by digging down the Fences the Wisdom of the Nation have made about it.

In the play itself the character based on Collier is Sir Jerry Witwould. His name implies he has ambitions to be a wit, but clearly lacks the ability, and is described in the cast list as 'a Hypocrite, and false Zealot for Religion, and sets up for a Reformer of the Stage'.[36] We see here the tropes of hypocrisy and zealotry that were so often used against nonconformists and Catholics being turned against Collier and the Non-Jurors. It is clear from the text of the play, however, that Sir Jerry is not Collier, even though he shares many of his perceived characteristics. This is because a significant proportion of the dialogue is a debate between the characters about Collier and his opinions.

There are two groups of characters. Alongside Sir Jerry in the antitheatrical camp are Lord Vaunt-Title, a frustrated playwright, and Lady Clemene, who refers to the 'Charming Mr Collier' and describes the stage as a 'School of Debauchery'. On the other side of the argument are four people who are each of 'good sense' and a 'friend to the stage.' Dorimant, one of the friends, airs one of the criticisms of Collier that he sets up straw men – 'Mr. Collier does by the Poets, what he says Aristophanes did by Socrates, he puts them on an odious Dress, and then Rails at 'em for their Habit.' Dorimant admits that there has been some profanity and blasphemy on the stage but says the whole of drama cannot be condemned because of this. He turns this argument back on Collier by arguing that 'because there has been Prophaneness and Blasphemy in some Particular Pulpits; therefore the Pulpits is Prophane and Blasphemous.' Later in the play Hotspur, another friend to the stage, draws on another of the principal criticisms of Collier, which is that he extracts 'Prophaneness out of all things that fall into his Hands'. He also asserts that many of the playwrights are better Christians than Collier and 'worthy to enter any Church but his.' Sir Jerry quotes from Collier's works and says that he will be seeing Collier in a few days' time. Lady Clemene admits she used to enjoy the theatre, but her view changed when she read Collier's book. She then says that she has returned to the theatre many times to check just how prophane the plays are, in the same way that Collier has read the plays over and over again. The ever-present trope of the hypocrite is prominent at the end of the play when Sir Jerry attempts to seduce Clemene and is discovered by the rest of the company. He asks them not to tell the playwrights, but they say it is right that a hypocrite is exposed. To which Sir Jerry replies that 'If the Hypocrites were exposed half the town would go naked! and all the Stage Enemies, like me, go off with their Tails betwixt their Legs'.[37]

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[33] William R. Jones, 'Thomas Brown' in *ODNB Online*, 3654.

[34] There is no evidence of a production of this play but the title page of the published play says it was 'Spoken at the Theatre-Royal in Drury Lane'. Brown, *Stage Beaux*, title page.

[35] Ibid., 'The epistle dedicatory'.

[36] Ibid., 'The prologue' (n), 'The persons names'.

The Non-Juror, Colley Cibber, 1717.

After 1711 the Collier Controversy became dormant until 1717 when the London stage saw the most explicit connection with the Non-Jurors in Cibber's play. As well as being a playwright and a theatre manager, Cibber was one of the most acclaimed actors of his day. His support for the Whigs and the Hanoverian succession helped him towards the Poet Laureateship in 1730.[38] Before exploring the play itself, it is important to examine the historical context of this period and the events that may have led Cibber to write his play when he did. Cibber himself gives the 1715 Jacobite rebellion as the impetus for the play and to 'set the Authors, and Principles of that desperate Folly in a fair light'. He explains his attack on the Non-Jurors - 'by making the artful Pretenders to Conscience, as ridiculous, as they were ungratefully wicked, was a subject fit for the honest satire of comedy'.[39] There were two other relevant disputes that reached critical points in 1717 – the Bangorian Controversy and the prorogation of Convocation (see sections 1.2 and 5.3). Even if these events didn't directly inspire Cibber to write, they helped to create a receptive climate for the play which was hugely successful when it opened in December 1717. Streete sees this play as an example of 'drama's more emboldened political voice in the public sphere'.[40] As mentioned in the Introduction, although the Non-Jurors can be seen as politically motivated, they created a schism in the Church of England and so their existence, as underscored in this play, are relevant to the religious history of the period.

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[37] Ibid., 'The persons names', pp. 5, 11, 12, 18, 43-45, 60.

[38] Eric Salmon, 'Colley Cibber' in *ODNB Online*, 5416.

[39] Dudley H. Miles, 'The political satire of "The Non-Juror"', *Modern Philology,* 13 (1915), pp. 281-304, p. 281.

The Non-Juror is Cibber's version of *Tartuffe*. As in Moliere's play the head of the family, Sir John Woodvil, has fallen under the influence of a hypocritical cleric – this time a Non-Juror called Dr Wolf. Colonel Woodvil, his son, is exasperated by his father having fallen prey to 'this vile nonjuring Zealot!' As with the attacks on Puritans, nonconformists, and Catholics in earlier plays, much of the polemical work is done through the portrayal of hypocrisy, and Wolf's hypocrisy is mentioned seven times by the other characters. Before we meet him, we are already given a picture of his lasciviousness. The Colonel believes Wolf has designs on his sister Maria and reports that 'at the Tea-Table, I have seen the impudent Goat most lusciously sip off her leavings.'[41] In the scenes that follow, it becomes clear that Sir John intends that Wolf should marry Maria. Wolf plays along with this, but his aim is not to marry Maria, but to enjoy a sexual relationship with her mother. Once again masquerade plays an important role in the plot of the play. Cibber published a filleted version of the play that focused on 'The particular Scenes wherein that Hypocrite is concern'd', and which added footnotes by Cibber, which made his intentions even more explicit. One of these footnotes confirms the use of masquerade - Cibber described 'Nonjuring Parsons, who being for the most part Popish priests, act their villainy in masquerade.'[42]

The Non-Juror was highly successful. It had a comparatively long run and made lots of money for Cibber, who was given permission to dedicate his play to King George and to present the play before him. Its publication was also successful, with five editions appearing within a year. The play was controversial and provoked a number of attacks in journals and pamphlets.[43] One particularly strong attack came from a pamphlet in early 1718 entitled *The Theatre Royal Turn'd into a Mountebank's Stage*. Although the pamphlet is anonymous, Anthony is convinced the author is Collier and she presents extensive evidence to support her attribution.[44] Once again, comparison with the Puritans is used to denigrate a dissenting group – this time the Non-Jurors. The pamphlet disputes these implied parallels, and the author strongly resents what he sees as Cibber's attempt to take the 'Reproach due to the vicious and disloyal' Puritans and attach it as 'an indelible Stain of Infamy on the character of the Non-Juror.' He goes on to suggest that, if Cibber had wanted to expose hypocrisy, he should have made the central character a ‘Scotch Covenanter or an English Schismatick’ rather than an obedient Non-Juror. As mentioned in section 1.3, this flexible use of Moliere’s plot was used by Medbourne and Crowne to attack dissenters and Catholics. The author is clearly sensitive to the perception that the Non-Jurors are religiously disobedient as he seeks to persuade the reader that their dispute is political rather than religious. Whilst conceding that ‘a surrender of some scruples’ prevents obedience to the Government, he emphasises the Non-Jurors’ adherence to episcopacy and their obedience to the Church of England, of which he considers they are still members.[45] In his Remarks, Cibber describes good Christians who have been ‘seduced by a parcel of villains … to believe loyalty to King George is pernicious’.[46] It is clear from the Prologue (written by fellow playwright Nicholas Rowe) that the dramatists see the Non-Jurors as disobedient to both Church and State and that they ‘hate our Monarch and our Church alike’. In the play itself, the Church as well as the Crown are seen to be the enemy of the Non-Jurors. In the first scene, Sir John Woodvil sneers at the Church of England and expresses the Nonjuring belief that it is a ‘foul Nest of Heresy and Schism’.[47]

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[40] Streete, *Apocalypse*, p. 251.

[41] Colley Cibber, *The non-juror* (London, 1718), pp. 2, 12.

[42] Cibber, *Remarks*, p. 16.

[43] Judith Milhous and Robert D. Hume (ed), *A register of English theatrical documents 1660-1737 volume 2* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, 1991), pp. 597-602.

[44] Anthony, *Collier*, pp. 251-259.

The accusation that the Non-Jurors are fundamentally traitorous is manifested as soon as Wolf first appears on stage. He is challenged to offer prayers for the Royal Family which, as a Non-Juror, he seeks to avoid. As Cibber states in his *Remarks*, Wolf abhors the House of Hanover and will not pray for it.[48] Wolf goes further by hinting that regime change is imminent. The Colonel sees Wolf’s attitude as a clerical challenge to the crown that bears comparison with Thomas Becket’s challenge to Henry II. The idea that the Church should be free from monarchical interference was one of the Non-Jurors strongest beliefs.[49] Wolf’s treasonous intent is made clear from a paper accidentally dropped by Sir John. This is in Wolf’s hand and includes a record of payments he has made relating to various acts of rebellion, or what the Colonel describes as ‘a Heap of stupid, cold-scented Treason’.[50] The playwrights included treasonous intent as one of the primary characteristics of their portrayals of the Non-Jurors and, by the end of the play, it becomes clear that Wolf is a Catholic priest in disguise. This may not have been much of a revelation to audiences as the name of Wolf would have alerted them to resonances of wolfish hypocrisy and disguise dating back to the Sermon on the Mount. Also, attacks on Catholics used the metaphor of the wolf: ‘The Pope pretendeth that he is a Pastor, when as in truth, he is far from feeding of the Flock of Christ; but rather as a Wolf, seeketh but to feed on and to suck out the blood of true Christians'.[51]

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[45] A Non-juror, *The Theatre-Royal turn'd into a mountebank's stage. In some remarks upon Mr Cibber's quack-dramatical performance, called The non-juror* (London, 1718), pp. 3-6.

[46] Cibber, *Remarks*, p. 6.

[47] Cibber, *The non-juror*, pp. vii, 3.

[48] Cibber, *Remarks*, p. 8.

[49] Miles, 'The political satire of "The Non-Juror"', p. 115.

[50] Cibber, *The non-juror*, p. 23.

Some critics have argued that Wolf was modelled on Collier.[52] It is not difficult to imagine Cibber having Collier in his mind's eye as he created Wolf, but the satire strikes more widely at the Non-Jurors and the antitheatricals than would be needed for an individual character assassination. In his Dedication to the king, Cibber quickly moves on to the attack against those who wish to suppress plays and who 'turn'd our Church, and Constitution, into Irreligion and Anarchy' thus linking together Collier, the Non-Jurors, the Jacobites, and the Puritans.[53] He states that his ambition was 'to attack those lurking Enemies of our Constitution from the Stage.' He also keeps the Non-Jurors in his sights. For example, the controversy over the appointment of new Non-Juror bishops finds its moment in the play. One of the prominent Non-Jurors was George Hickes and, in 1694, he was appointed as the Non-Juror bishop of Thetford. In the play, Wolf reports to Sir John that he has been promoted to 'the vacant See of Thetford.'[54] This brief reference to an event of over twenty years earlier could show how authors were able to play on the historical memory of their audiences to add richness to their texts – or perhaps Cibber only included it for his own amusement.

5.3 The Bangorian Controversy

By 1717, debates about toleration and persecution had been persistent for many years. In a renowned dispute between John Locke and Jonas Proast in 1690, Locke argued that 'such is the nature of the understanding, that it cannot be compelled to the belief of anything by outward force.'[55] Proast believed that force could do 'some service toward bringing men to embrace that Truth, which otherwise, either through Carelesness and Negligence they would never acquaint themselves with'.[56] The debate gained new energy in 1717 when a sermon preached before the king by Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor, took as its text 'Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this World' (John 18.36). Hoadly used this text as the basis for his argument for toleration and against persecution. He argued that Christ had not delegated to any earthly person the power over individual consciences and that there were 'no judges over the Consciences or Religion of his People.’ He saw persecution as effectively stealing Christ’s power by ‘taking Christ’s Kingdom out of His Hands, and placing it in their own.’ For him, persecution worked against true religion - ‘to apply Force or Flattery, Worldly pleasure or pain; is to act contrary to the Interests of True Religion’.[57] The pamphlet storm that followed was extensive and indicated divisions within the Church of England. Andrew Starkie sees the Bangorian Controversy as involving ‘high churchmen, nonjurors, orthodox whig churchmen, heterodox low churchmen and those deemed “Freethinkers”’.[58] Knights argues that Hoadly’s position was anticlerical, and this underlies the primary criticism of Dr Andrew Snape, Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.[59] Snape disputed Hoadly’s premise and stated that Christ did delegate his authority over his Church and ‘provided for the good Government of it, by others whom he commission'd to teach and expound his Laws, to bear Rule and Authority over his Subjects’. Snape argued that without an earthly power ‘to keep his Subjects in Order, the Church of Christ must have been a Babel, and his Kingdom a Realm of Confusion.’[60] The Bangorian Controversy, and the debate between Hoadly and Snape in particular, is the central issue in a pamphlet play published later in the same year.

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[51] Anonymous, *Popish cruelties wherein may be seen that Romish traitors have now the same murthering and treasonable principles and practices they had in Q. Elizabeth's reign* (London, 1680), p. 29.

[52] Rodney L. Hayley, 'Cibber, Collier, and "The Non-Juror"', *Huntington Library Quarterly,* 43 (1979), pp. 61-75, pp. 61-75; Matthew H. Wikander, *Fangs of malice hypocrisy, sincerity, & acting* (Iowa City, 2002), p. 34.

[53] Cibber, *The non-juror*, 'To the king'; Hayley, 'Cibber, Collier, and "The Non-Juror"', p. 62.

[54] Cibber, *The non-juror*, pp. iii, 24.

[55] John Locke, *A letter concerning toleration humbly submitted, etc* (London, 1689), p. 7.

[56] Jonas Proast, *The argument of the Letter concerning toleration, briefly consider'd and answer'd* (London, 1690), p. 5.

The Inquisition, John Philips, 1717.

Very little is known about Philips, except as the author of *The Inquisition* and two other plays. There is no evidence of this play having been performed, which is unsurprising as it is dramatically unsophisticated. It is almost entirely a disputation between three Doctors of Divinity who support Snape’s position, and two Church of England divines who support Hoadly. As so often in the plays, the sympathies of the playwright are immediately clear from the names of the cast listed at the beginning. The Doctors are called Sly, Driver, and Hurry Durry, while Hoadly’s supporters are called Christian and Zeal. Their characters match up to their names. The question Hoadly raised of whether force should be used in matters of conscience is central to the argument from the start. Driver looks back nostalgically to the reign of Charles II when clerics could force dissenters to go to church ‘or at least seize their Goods and their Persons.’ Hurry Durry is appalled that Hoadly is arguing that ‘no Force is to be us’d to compel Men’s Consciences’ – a position that he sees as ‘ten times worse’ as it comes from a bishop. Christian joins the conversation and adopts the theme of hypocrisy. In his brief summary of Hoadly’s position, he advocates a denial of the use of temporal punishment ‘for forcing Men to

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[57] Benjamin Hoadly, *The nature of the kingdom, or church, of Christ* (London, 1717), pp. 3, 12, 14, 20.

[58] Starkie, *Bangorian Controversy*, p. 2.

[59] Mark Knights, ‘The politics of Religion after the Revolution’ in Nicholas Tyacke, *The English Revolution c.1590-1720 : politics, religion and communities* (Manchester, 2007), p. 196.

[60] Andrew Snape, *A letter to the Bishop of Bangor, occasion'd by his Lordship's sermon preach'd before the King at S. James's, March 31st, 1717* (London, 1717), pp. 19-20.

Hypocrisy, and to the professing a Faith which they do not really believe'. He makes the argument for the effectiveness of toleration by picking up Driver's reference to the reign of Charles II. He draws the contrast between the 'Sixty Thousand Families … ruin'd for Dissenting' in that reign with the comparative 'calm and quiet' in the years since. He sees the intolerance of the earlier period as creating a more dangerous schism. The trope of associating the High Church with Catholicism is used by Christian who says that Snape's 'whole Pamphlet seems much to incline to Popery'. This is amplified by Zeal who describes Snape's followers as a 'Gang of Popify'd High Flyers'. There is one comic character in the play – the vintner who is serving drinks to the central characters. He makes a comparison between the Low and High Churches through what they drink, which uses the theme of immorality to give emphasis to the playwright's sympathies. He says he prefers the High Churchmen as they 'spend their Money freely, and drink a Bottle or two a Man', whereas the more abstemious 'Low-Church Priggs sit sipping over half a Pint of neat Port.'[61]

The title page announces that, in the play, the 'Controversy … is fairly Stated, and set in a true Light.'[62] However, this statement, like the play itself, is polemical and one-sided. It has received little attention from scholars, but Lawrence Dooley has drawn the contrast between the 'personal and "natural" intuition' of Christian and Zeal and the corruption of the High Church divines.[63] This contrast is made explicit through the names of the characters, their style of language, and their attitudes to each other.

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This chapter has shown us disreputable conformists who bear comparison with characters from previous chapters. The hypocritical arrogance of Lady Fancy, Lady Desborough, and Lady Worthy, is similar to that shown by the Puritans in *The Roundheads*, Oldcutt in *The Royalist,* and Lady Lovemore in *the Devil of a Wife;* the attitude to marriage shown by Scruple in *The Cheats* can also be seen in Chaplain Bull and other conforming clerics; Chaplain Bull also bears comparison with Dominic in *The Spanish Friar* – gluttony, avarice, licentiousness, and hypocrisy are fundamental to both characters; and *The Non-Juror* gives us the conformist version of Tartuffe that we saw in *The English Frier* even though, at the end of the play, Wolf turns out to be a Catholic in disguise. As we have seen, conformists are not treated differently in these plays to characters from outside the Church of England and, as with the nonconformists and the Catholics, there are few examples of the benign conformist. This lack of denominational discrimination provides evidence of a negativity towards religion in general. To test this argument further, we must now look beyond Christianity.

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[61] John Philips, *The inquisition* (London, 1717), pp. 2, 6, 12-14, 26.
[62] Ibid., title page.
[63] Lawrence Dooley, '*Enthusiasts, Jacobites, and Deists: Religious nonconformity and English comic drama, 1700-1737*' (PhD thesis, Indiana University, 2000), p. 136.

6 BEYOND CHRISTIANITY

Most of the plays in this period are set in societies where Christianity was the primary religion, albeit with a wide range of denominations. Some plays, however, are set in non-Christian societies and others show us non-Christian minorities in Christian societies. This section is not an exhaustive review of all such plays, but it offers a selection for comparative analysis. I have chosen these particular plays for two reasons. Firstly, I wanted to include a range of different religions and, in these plays, we will see representatives of Judaism, Islam, Zoroastrianism, and Roman religion. Secondly, these plays offer fruitful opportunities to explore further the theme of toleration. All but one of the plays I have selected were written after the Glorious Revolution and, in their different ways, they all reflect to some extent the shifting attitude away from persecution and towards religious toleration and coexistence. Three of the plays are set in the early centuries of the Christian era in Jerusalem, Rome, and Persia, and two are set in the early modern period – one in Islamic controlled Barbary and one in England. Despite this range of times and locations, the main themes of the thesis continue to be reflected, and in similar ways. We will see hypocritical characters, many forms of disguise, and a widespread sense of anticlericalism.

There are moments when these plays could be seen as allegories of religious and political developments in England, but Bridget Orr warns against viewing them as simple allegories. She argues rather that we should consider how they explore religious, political, and cultural differences with these other societies.[1] My view is that some of these plays have their allegorical moments but, as Orr says, these are not simple. But I do not see these plays primarily as explorations of other religions and their differences to early modern Christianity. When Christians appear in the plays, they usually emerge on the winning side, but I do not believe that the main purpose of these plays is to show that the other religions are inferior. I share Matthew Birchwood's view that 'fascination with the Orient may be indexed not to perceived weaknesses there, but to religious and political anxieties at home.'[2] As William Bulman argues, some religious themes had become universalized by the late seventeenth century and there was 'no longer anything inherently Christian about popery, puritanism, or priestcraft'.[3] I will show that the religious themes featured in this thesis are broadly the same - wherever and whenever the plays are set.

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[1] Orr, *Empire on the English stage : 1660-1714*, pp. 28, 46.

[2] Birchwood, *Staging Islam in England : drama and culture, 1640-1685*, pp. 4, 8.

[3] William J. Bulman, *Anglican enlightenment: Orientalism, religion and politics in England and its empire, 1648–1715* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 126.

Jews on stage in two plays by John Crowne - *The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian* (1677) and *Caligula* (1698).

Jews do not feature frequently in plays of the period. This contrasts with the Elizabethan and Jacobean ages when there were many plays that included Jewish characters, including Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* and, most famously, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, but there is no evidence of revivals of these two plays between 1660 and 1720.[4] Between these periods, Jews had been readmitted into England by Cromwell, following their expulsion by Edward I in 1290. In the few plays of the period in which Jews are represented, the attitude to them is not aggressive and, in some cases, it is sympathetic. By the end of the period, one dramatist saw them as less worrying than Catholics - 'A Jew ? Oh, that's well!---A Jew ?---Truly, I was afraid he had been a Papist.'[5] One reason for this tolerant attitude is that the restored monarchy sought to portray itself as a new Israel, including the use of symbols of Davidic kingship. Scholars have identified ways in which the royalists had long been developing a narrative based on Biblical stories of exile and return, culminating in the Restoration bringing a new King David back to his new Jerusalem.[6] Ralph Josselin wrote in his diary in May 1660 that 'the nation runneth into the King as Israel to bring back David' and, as we can see from Figure 6-1, there was the sense that Charles II, like David, was returning from banishment.[7]

This narrative continued through the reign of Charles II and found its most long-lasting representation in Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*. One element of Dryden's poem that is relevant here is the division between religious groups in Israel and, by allegory, in England. This division reflects what John West has described in the poem as the contrast between the health of the father of the people (Charles II) with the decay of 'a dissenting plot against the state.'[8] The dangers of religious schism and dissenting plotting can also be seen in a play set in Jerusalem, written a few years before *Absalom and Achitophel*.

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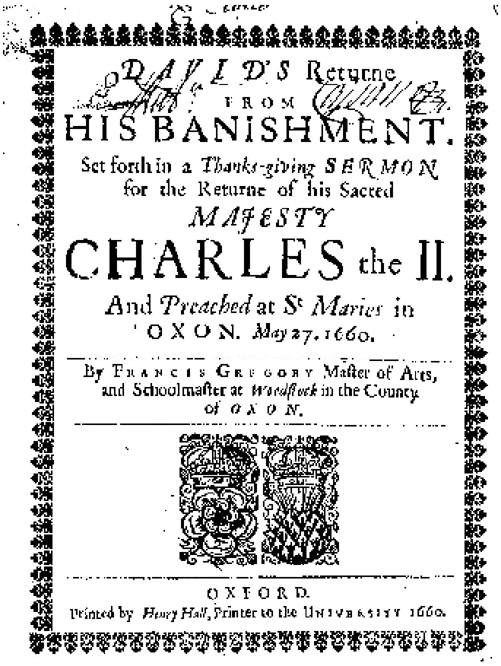
[4] Edward Davidson Coleman, Joshua Bloch, Edgar Rosenberg and New York Public Library, *The Jew in English drama; an annotated bibliography* (New York, 1970). The appendix of this book records twenty-five plays in English written during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I, compared to eleven plays from 1660-1720; Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*.

[5] Christopher Bullock, *The per-juror* (London, 1717), p. 21.

[6] Achsah Guibbory, *Christian identity, Jews, and Israel in seventeenth-century England* (Oxford ; New York, 2010), pp. 256-7; Vanita Neelakanta, 'Exile and restoration in John Crowne's The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian', *Philological quarterly,* 89 (2010), pp. 185-207, p. 187.

[7] Ralph Josselin and Alan Macfarlane (ed), *The diary of Ralph Josselin, 1616–1683* (Oxford, 2015), p. 463.

[8] Guibbory, *Christian identity, Jews, and Israel in seventeenth-century England*, p. 292; West, *Dryden and enthusiasm*, p. 65.



DAVID'S Returne
FROM
HIS BANISHMENT.
Set forth in a *Thanks-giving* SERMON
for the Returne of his Sacred
MAJESTY
CHARLES the II.
And *Preached* at S^t^ *Maries* in
OXON. *May 27. 1660.*

By FRANCIS GREGORY Maſter of Arts,
and Schoolmaſter at *Woodſtock* in the County
of *OXON.*

OXFORD.
Printed by *Henry Hall*, Printer to the UNIVERSITY 1660.

Figure 6-1: *David's Return from His Banishment Set Forth in a Thanks-Giving Sermon for the Return of His Sacred Majesty Charles II*, 1660. Francis Gregory, (Oxford, 1660), title page.

Crowne's *The Destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian* is a long play written in two parts. As we have seen in earlier analyses of Crowne's plays, there is a fundamental antagonism towards dissenters and this manifests itself in a different context in this play. It tells the story of the Romans' destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 CE. One of the major sub-plots is the violent division between two groups of Jews – the establishment Sanhedrin and the dissenting Pharisees - who spend more of their energies fighting each other rather than the Romans. At a time when nonconformists were under attack in the campaign for religious uniformity, Crowne reflects the conflict between the Church of England and the nonconformists by his use of religious language. He gives the members of the Sanhedrin anti-Puritan language to describe the Pharisees as a 'usurping Sect' of 'Proud Separatists', whilst the Pharisees describe themselves as saints and see the Sanhedrin as adopting the equivalent of popish practices by allowing the display of Vespasian's image in the Temple. As the play develops, the language and the plans of the dissenting Pharisees become more violent, adopting the trope of gluttonous excess – 'Kill, kill these curst Apostates' … 'I'm thirsty for their blood' … 'To eat their flesh were holy gluttony.' In the Epilogue to Part 1, Crowne draws a clear parallel between the Pharisees and the nonconformists with the line 'Fanaticks are but Jews uncircumciz'd'.[9]

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[9] John Crowne, *The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian, part 1* (London, 1677), pp. 7, 9, 33, 34, 56.

The leader of the rebellious Pharisees is John, described in the list of characters as ‘A dissembling Pharisaick Jew’. Despite his speeches and plotting against the Sanhedrin, it is clear to the audience that he is a hypocrite. His real intention is his own advancement and, in an aside in Part 1, he admits that ‘One more Religious Lye, the Mitre's mine.’[10] In Part 2, he tells his followers that ‘Not Miters make a Priest, but Sanctity’ and ‘No Holy Man a Miter wants! / For we are all High Priests as we are Saints’, and that he is ‘the weakest, meanest of you all.’ But one of his fellow Pharisees declares that he has had a vision that John should accept the mitre and begs him to do so. When John next appears, the stage direction says that he is wearing ‘Pontifical Vestments’, reflecting the trope of the parallel between dissenters and papists. In contrast to the Pharisees, the members of the Sanhedrin are portrayed more sympathetically. For example, when their leader Matthias and his daughter are dying at the end of the play, his final words are ‘Come, Daughter, follow my Celestial part, / Haste to be more an Angel than thou art.’[11] This contrast indicates that the condemnation in this play is not directed against Jews in general, but against the dissenting sect.

Atheism surfaces in this play. One of the leading characters is Phraartes, a Parthian King who has fallen in love with the daughter of the High Priest and stays to help defend Jerusalem. He is something of a hero in the play, but it is clear he is also an atheist. His atheism is partly driven by his jealousy of the gods – he believes the people should ‘fear no Power but me’ – and partly by a desire for a delightful life unencumbered by religious restrictions. He describes religious laws as ‘the common Jail of Fools’ and wants to escape the power of religion and live on ‘some happy Star … Where the great Bell Religion is not heard’. He talks of gods as ‘shadows’ from which people should be freed and not have ‘their delights disturb'd by Priests’.[12] Including a heroic atheist in a play would seem to have been acceptable in 1677 but, by 1698, attitudes had changed, and Crowne felt the need to recant. In the introduction to his later play *Caligula* (1698), Crowne apologised for portraying Phraartes as ‘too beautifull an Image of an Atheist; and Atheism appears too reasonable and lovely.’[13] Although precise dates are not available, the publication of *Caligula* and Collier’s *Short View* were approximately co-terminus, so it is possible that Crowne was feeling the pressure of this new burst of antitheatricality.

In *Caligula*, Crowne follows the widely held story that the Roman Emperor Gaius, known more popularly by his nickname Caligula, had declared himself a god – ‘a living, new, young Jupiter’. Caligula condemns the Roman priests as having ‘no more Religion than my

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[10] Ibid., ‘The names of the persons in both plays’, p. 37.

[11] John Crowne, *The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus Vespasian, part 2* (London, 1677), pp. 14, 27, 51.

[12] Crowne, *Jerusalem 1*, pp. 29, 53.

[13] John Crowne, *Caligula* (London, 1698), ‘Epistle to the reader’.

Horse.' Crowne raises the issue of religious toleration through a sympathetic Jew - the ambassador Philo, described as 'A noble Agent Learned and Eloquent. / His Life is Pious, and his Conduct Sage'. Caligula has decreed that if the Jews 'dare deny / To worship Cæsars Image, they shall die'. Philo tells Caligula that the Jews sacrifice for him every day, but this is not enough for Caligula. He demands they should sacrifice to him. Philo then asks for the religious toleration previously granted by Augustus and 'by long custom known'. At the end of the play, after Caligula's assassination, Valerius offers the Jews religious toleration - 'And now you Jews, go, believe what you will.'[14] Also, at the end of the play, the Jewess Salome, daughter of Philo, marries Lepidus, the son of a Roman Knight. This play reflects both the developing climate of religious toleration and shows us an ugly end for a political leader who seeks to impose religious uniformity through persecution.

Don Sebastian, John Dryden, 1689.

Dryden wrote in the Prologue to *Don Sebastian*, his first post-Revolution play, that 'a Play's of no Religion.' Despite his comment, this play explores many religious issues – toleration, anticlericalism, the relationship between the church and the state, and religious conversion.[15]

There are many conversions in this play, including one re-conversion. Geremy Carnes observes that 'Each of the first four acts portrays at least one character revealing, performing, or announcing their intention to perform, a religious conversion.'[16] At the time the play was written, conversion was a live issue – both in the personal life of the author and in the wider political and religious condition of the nation. James, Duke of York, had converted to Catholicism (probably in the early 1670s) and his conversion had far-reaching political consequences. Charles II's lack of a legitimate heir apparent left the Catholic James as heir presumptive, much to the consternation of many Protestants in England, and the Popish Plot and the Succession Crisis followed directly from his conversion. Concerns about the potential conversion of England back to Catholicism was a significant factor in James's removal from the throne in 1688. Dryden himself converted to Catholicism, either just before or just after the accession of James II to the throne in February 1685.[17] Dryden did not re-convert after the Glorious Revolution, and his adherence to his new Catholic faith cost him the Poet Laureateship.

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[14] Ibid., pp. 28, 33, 43, 51.

[15] John Dryden, *Don Sebastian* (London, 1690), 'Prologue'.

[16] Geremy Carnes, 'Catholic conversion and incest in Dryden's "Don Sebastian"', *Restoration : studies in English literary culture, 1660-1700,* 38 (2014), pp. 3-19, p. 7.

[17] Paul Hammond states that it 'cannot be dated precisely'. Paul Hammond, 'John Dryden' in *ODNB Online*, 8108.

The play is set in Muslim-controlled Barbary in North Africa, just after a successful battle against Christian forces led by Don Sebastian, the king of Portugal. The most significant conversion in this play is that of Dorax, described in the cast list as ‘a Noble Portuguese now a Renegade, formerly Don Alonzo de Sylvera Alcalde, or Governor of Alcaza’. The Emperor describes him as ‘A Renegade / I know not more of him: but that he's brave, / And hates your Christian Sect.’ Dorax explains that ‘You know my story, how I was rewarded, / For Fifteen hard Campaigns, still hoop'd in Iron, / And why I turn'd Mahometan’. He seeks revenge on Don Sebastian, and sought him out in the recent battle, but without success. When it is proposed that he should forgive Don Sebastian, he shows the zeal of the convert by replying ‘Forgive him! no, I left my foolish Faith / Because it wou'd oblige me to forgiveness.’ By the end of the end of the play, however, Dorax has re-converted to Christianity and has become Alonzo again. He re-enters in Act Four ‘having taken off his Turbant and put on a Peruque Hat and Crevat.’ He confesses that ‘rage and pride debas'd me into Dorax’ and describes himself as having been ‘lost like Lucifer’.[18]

Dorax is not the only character to convert in this play. Almeyda is a captive Queen of Barbary and the sister of the recently defeated Mahumet. The Emperor falls in love with her, much to her disgust, and says he will marry her. She says she cannot marry him because ‘thou art deceiv'd, I am a Christian; / 'Tis true, unpractis'd in my new Belief’. The third conversion comes within the comic sub-plot of the play – the romance between the Portuguese Don Antonio and Morayma, the daughter of the Mufti, the religious leader. He proposes they should marry and that she should convert – ‘I'll marry thee, and make a Christian of thee thou pretty damn'd Infidel.’ She agrees to elope with him and, in an echo of Jessica in Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice*, she says she will bring her father’s jewels with her.[19]

All three of these conversions are in the same direction - from Islam to Christianity – demonstrating the implied superiority of Christianity. In the scene in which the ‘Rabble’ are rioting, however, their anarchy includes the desire for religious conversion, but in an unspecific way. One of their leaders says ‘I wou'd have a new Religion, where half the Commandments shou'd be taken away, the rest mollifi'd, and there shou'd be little or no Sin remaining’. To which the mob replies in unison – ‘Another Religion, a new Religion, another Religion.’[20] The urge for religious change in this scene reflects the religious space that had opened up at the time, with the change from a Catholic to a Protestant monarchy, and the renewed air of toleration.

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[18] Dryden, *Don Sebastian*, ‘Persons represented’, pp. 4, 27, 31, 102, 109.

[19] Ibid., pp. 34, 66-7.

[20] Ibid., pp. 95-6.

The balance of power between the church and the state is reflected in this play in two ways. As mentioned in Section 4.2, one aspect of anticlericalism in this period was the idea that clerics should not meddle in politics. The Emperor's conspiring Chief Minister has little time for the Mufti, who he sees as an incompetent politician – 'For Church-men, though they itch to govern all, / Are silly, woful, awkard Politicians'. His view is shared by Dorax who tells the Mufti to keep to religious matters and accuses him of being 'Bloated with Pride, Ambition, Avarice, / You swell, to counsel Kings and govern Kingdoms.' In a later scene, Dorax tells the Emperor, in front of the Mufti, that he has allowed his power to be usurped and that 'you went too far / To trust the Preaching pow'r on State Affairs, / To him or any Heavenly Demagogue. / 'Tis a limb lopt from your Prerogative'.[21] The Mufti tries to defend himself by giving examples of clerics who have also been successful politicians – including Cardinal Wolsey.

This reference to Wolsey is relevant to one other aspect of the church/state power battle in this play. The Emperor's plans to marry Almeyda are scuppered because she has married Don Sebastian. As with Henry VIII's instruction to Wolsey, the Emperor tells the Mufti to find a way to cancel the marriage by engineering what West has described as 'a fiction of providence'. West sees this episode as a satirical glance at Bishop Burnet's support for William III.[22] The Emperor tells the Mufti to bend the laws of Islam and 'wrest and rend the Law to please thy Prince.' He threatens a reformation - a form of national conversion - by telling the Mufti that Mahomet must 'speak my sense, / Or he's no Prophet here, and thou no Mufti'. He makes it very clear that he sees the Mufti as 'not Mahomet's Messenger, but mine'. The Mufti gets himself out of this tight spot by telling the Emperor that, although the law forbids him to marry a Christian, there is no prohibition to him ravishing her. The Emperor, having won this power struggle, declares 'How happy is the Prince who has a Churchman / So learn'd and pliant to expound his Laws.'[23]

This willingness to bend the religious laws is only one aspect of the Mufti that contributes to the anticlerical portrayal of him as a hypocrite. Early in the play he says that, although the law requires fasting and abstaining from alcohol, this should only apply to 'the Vulgar' and not to 'Kings and to their Guides', presumably including himself. Feasting and fasting are used metaphorically by his wife to emphasise his hypocrisy – 'The Mufti wou'd feast himself upon other Women, and keep me fasting.' When threatened with torture he sets himself apart from the vulgar with his hypocrisy – 'we may preach Suffering to others, but alas, holy Flesh is too well pamper'd to endure Martyrdom.' These are, however, minor infringements compared to his soliloquy in Act Four when he confesses not only his hypocrisy, but also his atheism. Religion is, to him, no more than a stepping-stone to power: ‘This 'tis to have a sound Head-piece; by this I have got to be chief of my Religion; that is, honestly speaking, to teach others what I neither know nor believe myself. For what's Mahomet to me, but that I get by him?’[24]

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[21] Ibid., pp. 24, 26, 54-5.

[22] West, *Dryden and enthusiasm*, p. 131.

[23] Dryden, *Don Sebastian*, pp. 45-6.

Finally, there is a reference to the growing mood of religious toleration and coexistence at the time. It comes from the leader of the Rabble who says that ‘mankind is grown wiser at this time of day, than to cut one anothers throats about Religion. Our Mufti is a Green coat, and the Christians is a black coat; and we must wisely go together by the ears’.[25]

The portrayals of anticlericalism and toleration in this play are similar to examples examined in earlier chapters. By contrast, the theme of conversion is explored in a more nuanced way through a wide range of conversion types – conversion followed by reconversion, the threat of national conversion as a personal and political weapon, the unwavering commitment to a conversion, and the somewhat reckless desire of the rabble for any kind of conversion. Many were faced with the decision about whether to reconvert after the Glorious Revolution, so it is perhaps unsurprising that Dryden treats the subject in a nuanced way.

Distress’d Innocence, Elkanah Settle, 1690.

After a long absence, Settle returned to the stage in October 1690. He admitted that he had spent ten years ‘rambling into Politicks’ - a ramble that was not particularly successful - and that he was ‘resolved to quit all pretensions to State-craft, and honestly sculk into a Corner of the Stage, and there die contented.’[26] But he did not sculk and did not die for another thirty-four years, during which time he wrote many more plays and poems. As we saw in chapter 4, Settle made significant contributions to the anti-Catholic movement, particularly with his play *The Female Prelate*, and by using his theatrical skills and experience to stage the popular pope-burning pageants. But his political allegiances became more fluid over the years. After the defeat of the Exclusion movement in 1682, he started writing Tory propaganda, he then supported James II through his reign, and eventually switched his support to William and Mary, but only after their accession had been established.[27]

Settle’s first play of this new reign was *Distress’d Innocence*. The tragedy of this play is mostly driven by personal ambition and the desire for vengeance, exacerbated by the capricious behaviour of a king who believes unquestioningly every plot that is reported to him.

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[24] Ibid., pp. 6, 60, 75-6, 96.

[25] Ibid., p. 99.

[26] Elkanah Settle, *Distress'd innocence, or, The Princess of Persia* (London, 1691), ‘The epistle dedicatory’.

[27] John West, ‘”A great romance feigned to raise wonder”: Literature and the Making of the 1689 Succession’ in Kewes and McRae (ed), *Stuart succession literature*, pp. 124-125; Abigail Williams, ‘Elkanah Settle’ in *ODNB Online*, 25128.

The context of the play, however, is explicitly religious. It is set in Persia in the period between the birth of Christianity and the rise of Islam. The dominant religion in Persia at the time was Zoroastrianism, but Settle denigrates the religious establishment by portraying them as sun-worshippers. As in the historical record, the play shows that there was a significant Christian minority that coexisted with the Persians at this time, and it engages with the issue of religious toleration.[28] It shows a monarch, Isdigerdes, who tolerates this religious minority in the face of opposition from the Magi, the priests of the established religion. When Isdigerdes first appears in the play he is in friendly conversation with the Christian Bishop, seen by the Magi as a 'croaking Poysoner'. The bishop says all Christians in his empire continue to pray for him because of his protection of the Christian altars. Isdigerdes also welcomes to his court Theodosius, the Christian heir to the western Roman Empire. Although Isdigerdes has not converted to Christianity, one important member of his family has – his nephew Hormidas, the empire's military commander, and the hero of the play. This policy of toleration is perceived by the Magi as the – 'effeminate Indulgence / Of our tame Monarch [who] has supinely suffer'd / An upstart Christian Sect of Worshipers /To spread a Canker'd Weed through his whole Empire'.[29] The Magi see Hormidas as the apostate leader of the Christians and seek to undermine him. Their hatred of Hormidas is shared by Otrantes, but he is driven by personal ambition and a desire for revenge. Between them, for their different reasons, they have poisoned Isdigerdes against Hormidas. Settle uses an event from history to drive his plot but turns the story on its head. In the reign of Isdigerdes (or Yazdgird I in the historical record), Christians started setting fire to temples in an attempt to undermine Zoroastrianism.[30] In this play, the Christians are shown as innocent, and the temple is set alight by Otrantes and his fellow conspirator Rugildas with the intention that the 'whole Christian Race bleed for't tomorrow.' After the fire has destroyed the temple, the Magi accuse the Christians and condemn them as a 'Sacrilegious Mass of Villany'. They also construct fake news by reporting that a Christian has confessed to the crime and that it was ordered by Hormidas and the bishop. When privately asked by Rugildas whether this is true, their response is shameless – 'Truth Fool! Is't not enough / The Reputation of my holy Robe / Delivers it for truth?'. The use of the clerical robe as a sartorial mask of hypocrisy adds to the growing sense of anticlericalism. Further metaphors of hypocritical masks follow swiftly. Isdigerdes accuses the bishop of being a 'fair painted Saint' and Hormidas of having the false eyes of a 'mourning crocodile' and a 'thick impenetrable Front' which cannot blush. Isdigerdes believes the

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[28] Richard E. Payne, *A state of mixture : Christians, Zoroastrians, and Iranian political culture in late antiquity* (Oakland, 2015), pp. 1-2.

[29] Settle, *Distress'd innocence*, pp. 3-4.

[30] Payne, *A state of mixture*, p. 47.

Christians are responsible and orders a persecution of them that will be so extensive it will make Nero's persecution seem 'But Scars to the more gaping Persian Wounds.'[31]

From this point in the plot, personal motivations and relationships take over and religious issues slip into the background until the end of the play when the truth is revealed. Once again, a priestly robe serves as a disguise as Otrantes wears one to get access to assassinate Isdigerdes. But the king has been warned and is ready for his 'Cut-throat Masquerader' and when Otrantes has been arrested tells him that 'We have prepar'd a Counter-Masque to match you.'[32] Isdigerdes recalls his orders for the persecution of the Christians and orders the capture and execution of the Magi. Although the play ends with many deaths and personal tragedies, persecution has failed, and Christianity in Persia has survived.

There are two other topical issues that are touched on in this play. The first is the relationship between the monarch and the church, and the question of the godly nature of monarchy. Isdigerdes accuses one of the Magi of being his 'conscience driver' and asks 'Who made you Lords Over the Faith of Kings?'. But he does not believe in the divinity of kings as he reveals in a soliloquy in Act 5 when he bewails that 'we resemble Heav'n (alas) no more, Than theirs the Bliss, and ours the Toil of Pow'r!'[33] The second issue is the complications around monarchical succession, as we saw in chapter 4. At the start of the play there appears to be a question of whether the crown should pass to a direct female offspring or a male nephew. Matters become extremely complicated as the play progresses through mistaken identities and conspiracy. By the end of the play, the succession waters have become extremely muddied, and all the potential successors are dead.

It is tempting to draw analogies between the plot of this play and the politics of the regime change of 1688, but we should heed Orr's warning not to adopt 'a single allegorical meaning stemming from domestic politics.'[34] We should also recognise, as West has argued, that imaginative literature was under pressure at this time because of the complications of William III's accession.[35] A direct allegory could have been dangerous for Settle, but the broader issues of the play resonate with the political developments of the two years that preceded its premiere – the demise of the reign of the last 'divine right' monarch of England, a succession with problems of legitimacy, and the fading of religious persecution. We also witness, of course, the victory of Christianity over what would have been seen as a pagan religion.

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[31] Settle, *Distress'd innocence*, pp. 12, 15-17.

[32] Ibid., p. 53.

[33] Ibid., pp. 7, 51.

[34] Orr, *Empire on the English stage : 1660-1714*, p. 46.

[35] John West '"A great romance feigned to raise wonder": Literature and the Making of the 1689 Succession', p. 131.

An Act at Oxford, Thomas Baker, 1704.

As well as the developing acceptance of religious toleration, another feature of life in England after the Glorious Revolution was on the rise - the importance of commerce. The role played by some Jews in the commercial life of England at this time led to what Michael Ragussis describes as a ‘new, secular, sanitized image of the Jew’. Ragussis also argues that this commercial success made it credible for the Jew to be seen as attractive to women, and we see this in Baker’s comedy.[36] The audience do not see a Jew on stage, but we do see a convincing Jewish disguise.

Captain Smart decides to carry out a ‘mock Intrigue’ by sending a man to court the object of his affections – but, to test the woman, this man should have no good qualities except his money. He decides, therefore, that he should be seen as a Jew and sends his servant Chum in a Jewish disguise. He remembers seeing ‘a parcel of fluttering Fop Jews’ who were favourites with the ladies, although he thought they were of ‘the most forbidding Aspect Nature ever fram'd’. This is confirmed by Arabella, described as ‘Wife to the Deputy, a Modern City Lady.’ When she meets the disguised Chum there is much flirtation and she tells her friend that ’I'm mightily taken with him.’ She considers Jewish women to be ‘the genteelest Creatures, and come nearest the French of any People’. She contrasts them with ‘your fair visiting Fops, that have no more Manners than to win the Ladies Mony’. In her experience, the cash flows the other way with the Jews - ‘I have borrow'd Mony of 'em and ne'r paid 'em, and yet they have been wonderfully civil’. Arabella’s attitude is not shared by all. Squire Calf shows his antisemitism and his ignorance of Judaism when, having been told that a Jew is planning to woo his mistress, exclaims – ‘A Jew marry my Mistress! Hatchets, Knives, Blunderbusses and Bagpipes, I'll Circumcise the Dog.’[37]

Chum’s disguised performance is not a negative stereotypical portrayal of a Jew. The negativity comes in the attitude shown by some of the other characters, which indicates that antisemitism remained prevalent. Despite this prejudice, we see the Jews being tolerated because of their role in the commercial life of the nation.

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[36] Michael Ragussis, *Theatrical nation: Jews and other outlandish Englishmen in Georgian Britain* (Philadelphia, 2010), pp. 90-94.

[37] Baker, *An act at Oxford*, ‘Dramatis Personæ’, 9, 21, 32-3.

Although these plays show us different religions in different locations and at different times, the religious issues that emerge provide further evidence of the centrality of the themes explored in earlier chapters. There is an intense anticlericalism in the characters of the Pharisee John, the Mufti, and the Magi. The violent language of John bears comparison with that of the Duke of Guise in section 4.1 and his hypocrisy is clear from his admission that religion is primarily a stepping-stone to greater power. This religious deception is also seen in Phaartes and the Mufti, both of whom are revealed as atheists. The theme of toleration has found a rich context in these plays. In 1677 in *The Destruction of Jerusalem*, Crowne reflected the conflict between an established church and a group of dissenters. But, by the time we reach the plays written after the Glorious Revolution, we see evidence of an increasing sense of movement from persecution to toleration. This bears comparison with the glimpses of religious co-existence that we saw in the post-Revolutionary pamphlet plays in section 4.2, which were written in the same period.

Although Christianity is often seen as the superior religion in these plays, there is no universal ‘othering’ - criticism of other religions is no more strongly expressed as the attacks on nonconformists, Catholics, and Non-Jurors that were seen in earlier chapters. These plays have enabled a widening of the focus in time, geography, and religious affiliation. Despite this greater range, we still see hypocrisy, immorality, deception, and anticlericalism - wherever or whenever our gaze falls.

7 THE ATHEISM SPECTRUM

The dramatist Thomas Otway was a staunch Tory and lived a dramatic life. Jessica Munns describes him as ‘thin-skinned and bellicose’ and he is reported to have issued challenges to fellow dramatist Elkanah Settle and to John Churchill, later duke of Marlborough. He also joined the army for a time. His plays had many dedicatees, but he does not seem have found consistent patronage.[38] His final play was *The Atheist,* written in 1683 as a sequel to his successful play *The Souldier’s Fortune.* Despite this overt title and the declared atheism of its apparently eponymous character, the ambiguities and plot twists of this play make it a useful case study for grappling with the problematic challenge of defining atheism in early modern England. The word ‘atheist’, together with its derivatives, was in frequent use in this period.[39] At a time when very few people would have identified as an atheist, the extensiveness of the term is an indication of the wide range of ways in which the word was understood or defined. Also, its presence in so many polemical pamphlets indicates its potential as an indiscriminate term of abuse. The modern definition is clear – ‘Disbelief in, or denial of, the existence of a God’.[40] In early modern England the definition was far from clear. Most scholars have acknowledged that atheism in the period was what Roger Lund describes as ‘a portmanteau word’ that was ‘maddeningly polyvalent’.[41] This chapter will seek to unpack the portmanteau through an analysis of Otway’s play and other new plays of the period. This analysis will show that, while the dramatists were attacking religious characters in their plays, they were also opening up a space to imagine that religious scepticism went beyond criticism of individual characters or denominations and, perhaps, that the dramatists and the drama itself could be seen as atheistical.

In one of the plays, Vanbrugh’s *The Provok’d Wife,* Sir John Brute says that it is ‘a damn'd Atheistical Age’, and this was a view shared by some contemporaries.[42] The seventeenth-century antiquary, Anthony Wood, described it as ‘an age given to brutish pleasure and atheism’.[43] In 1686, Matthew Bryan drew a comparison between a sermon and a play – ‘An hour spent at a sermon, yea and upon God's day too, is thought too long, when a play of three or four hours is done too soon.’ He argued that this was evidence of ‘an atheistical and worldly spirit'.[44] Michael Hunter argues that the atheistic culture of wit was predominant in centres of political and social power, such as the coffeehouses and the Court.[45] Brian Cowan reports that the coffeehouses provided a potent cocktail of 'an urban setting, the valorization of wit, and the predominantly masculine society' and were, therefore, feared as a seedbed for atheism, whether they actually were nor not.[46] Connell sees the 1660s as a time when there was mounting alarm at what John Evelyn described as the 'atheistical liberty' of the public theatres and the 'Restoration court's reputation for irreligious wit.'[47] At the beginning of George Farquhar's 1700 comedy *The Constant Couple,* an old merchant expresses his astonishment that he has seen 'A Man at his Devotion so near the Court …. the very Air of this Park is heathenish, and every Man's Breath I meet scents of Atheism.'[48] Concerns were also expressed that these attitudes were spreading beyond the Court and the coffeehouses. In a pamphlet of 1685, John Scott observed that 'for nowadays to scorn and despise Religion is no longer the Prerogative of Wits and Vertuosoes, but the Infection is spread and propagated into Shops and Stalls, and the Rabble are become Professors of Atheism.'[49] The metaphor of a spreading infection was used by other writers. John Edwards wrote 'We ought to bewail the spreading Atheism of this Age wherein we live. Of old there were but few that openly profess'd it.'[50] As we saw earlier, medicalisation of all forms of the unorthodox was a frequent polemical weapon. Another powerful metaphor was used by Francis Atterbury – 'a settled contempt of Religion and the Priesthood have prevail'd everywhere … Scepticism, Deism, and Atheism itself over-run us like a Deluge'.[51]

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[38] Jessica Munns, ‘Thomas Otway’ in *ODNB Online*, 20944.
[39] A word search in Early English Books Online for the period from 1660 to 1720 produces over 5,000 hits.
[40] *OED*, ‘atheism’.
[41] Lund, *Ridicule, religion and the politics of wit in Augustan England*, p. 63.
[42] Vanbrugh, *The provok'd wife*, p. 62.
[43] Quoted in John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven ; London, 1991), p. 221.

The exploration of atheism in this chapter adopts the model of the spectrum. I have identified seven bands on this spectrum, but these are not isolated categories – there are many overlaps and recurrences. I have ordered the bands in decreasing order of irreligiosity - from explicit atheism, through areas of religious ambiguity, to committed Christians who were accused of atheism because of their dissent. Some of the terms I adopt for the different bands on the spectrum were coined by contemporaries or modern critics. In a 1694 sermon, Archbishop Tillotson used two terms to differentiate between contrasting types of atheists, and these terms have been adopted by modern scholars. Tillotson's first category was 'Speculative atheists' - those who 'do not believe the foundations and principles of Religion'.[52] Within this category are those who accepted atheism as an essential ingredient of wit and lived within a culture of what Hughes describes as **fashionable atheism.**[53] Tillotson's second category defined those who may or may not believe in 'the foundations and principles of Religion, the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and future rewards', but who live contrary to these beliefs. He accused such people of being guilty of **practical atheism**.[54] Two plays by Sir John Vanbrugh, *The Relapse* and *The Provok'd Wife*, provide vivid examples of practical atheists who behaved as if there was no God and no governing moral doctrine. These plays were first performed in the 1690s and were controversial from the start, reflecting the perceived connection between atheism and sexual immorality. They appeared at a time when concern about moral degradation had led to campaigns for the reformation of manners, and we will see later in this chapter that Vanbrugh thought it prudent to try to convince others of the morality of his plays. His protestations of innocence were largely unsuccessful, and these plays were extensively criticised in Collier's *Short View*. Collier's charge of the abuse of clergy was valid in this case, as one of Vanbrugh's practical atheists is a cleric, and anticlericalism is a theme that runs through many of the plays under consideration here.

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[44] Matthew Bryan, *A perswasive to the stricter observation of the Lords day in pursuance of His Majesties pious order and directions to preachers particularly about the observation of the Lord's day, &c.* (London, 1686), p. 20.

[45] Michael Hunter, *The decline of magic : Britain in the Enlightenment* (New Haven and London, 2020), p. 19.

[46] Brian Cowan, *The social life of coffee : The emergence of the British coffeehouse* (New Haven, 2005), pp. 234-5.

[47] Connell, *Secular Chains*, pp. 98-99; John Evelyn and Austin Dobson, *The diary of John Evelyn : with an introduction and notes. volume 2* (Cambridge, 2015), p. 263.

[48] George Farquhar, *The constant couple* (London, 1700), p. 2.

[49] John Scott, *The Christian life. wherein the fundamental principles of Christian duty are assigned, explained, and proved : volume I* (London, 1685), p. 141.

[50] John Edwards, *Some thoughts concerning the several causes and occasions of atheism* (London, 1695), p. 123.

[51] Francis Atterbury, *A letter to a convocation-man, concerning the rights, powers, and priviledges of that body* (London, 1697), p. 2.

The next band on the spectrum takes us from how people behaved to what they wrote. Some writers, because of their disrespectful attitude to religion, were seen as atheists or, as Meric Causobon called them in 1672, '**Scoffers and Drollers'**.[55] In this band I will explore the plays of the Court Wits. In their plays, the Wits did not engage directly with religious issues, but they were writing in a society where religion permeated everything, so it is not surprising that religious language and metaphors permeated their writing in ways that were seen by others as scoffing at religion. Their use of religious metaphors for sexual activity, discussed in section 2.1, also reflects the link between licentiousness and atheism.

The next band turns to those who concealed their atheism. The plays offer us examples of one type of shape-shifter who pretends to conform so that they can pursue the real driving force in their lives – not religion but the acquisition of wealth and power. Sacheverell gave us the term for this band on the spectrum**.** In his famous sermon in 1709 he referred to 'a secret sort of **Reserv'd Atheists**' who have no religion and although they 'pretend to be of the Church … they mean nothing but getting money and preferment'.[56]

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[52] John Tillotson, *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions by his Grace John Lord Arch-bishop of Canterbury ; the first volume* (London, 1694), p. 18.
[53] Hughes, *English drama*, p. 9.
[54] Tillotson, *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* , p. 18.
[55] Meric Casaubon, *A treatise proving spirits, witches, and supernatural operations, by pregnant instances and evidences together with other things worthy of note* (London, 1672), p. 42.

As well as those who prioritised mammon above God, there were non-believers who adopted a form of **social conformity** – attendance at church, and adherence to other expected modes of religious behaviour. One important reason for this attitude was a belief that conformity to an established church was an essential ingredient in a stable society. A more cynical reason was the wish for a quiet and uncomplicated life, as we will see when *The Atheist* is analysed.

Otway's play also provides an example of the next band on the spectrum – **recanting atheists**. In this period there were some high-profile recantations by former atheists, the most famous being the Earl of Rochester. Some of these, including Rochester's, were deathbed recantations and were, therefore, sometimes doubted. Both *The Atheist* and Crowne's *City Politiques* give excellent opportunities to explore this concept.

At this point on the spectrum, attention turns from those who were probably atheists and chose to conceal their lack of belief, to those who were believers, but who were attacked as atheists. Such accusations were rife in this period. **Heterodox Christians**, those individuals and groups who were committed Christians but whose religious beliefs did not conform to the Church of England, were regularly labelled as atheists by those who saw orthodoxy as under attack.[57] Michael Bryson sees these 'variations in belief' as a key factor for explaining many of the accusations of atheism.[58] Accusations were scattered widely - targets included Protestant nonconformists and Catholics. It also included Deists – those who believed in a supernatural being but rejected the revelatory aspects of Christianity and the authority of the Church of England - but there is little mention of them in the plays. We will see that *The Lancashire Witches* provides an interesting perspective on the indiscriminate use of such accusations.

This chapter will examine each of the bands on this spectrum through the new plays of the period. As we turn to the plays, one point about chronology is worth making. Keith Thomas sees the relative religious freedom of the 1640s and 1650s as contributing to the release of 'endemic scepticism into the open.'[59] Some scholars argue for a later date. Wootton and Hunter believe that 'the period c 1680-1715 was a pivotal one in the emergence of atheism'.[60]

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[56] Sacheverell, *The perils of false brethren*, pp. 10-11.

[57] Kenneth Sheppard, *Anti-atheism in early modern England 1580-1720 : The atheist answered and his error confuted* (Leiden, 2015), p. 4; Roger D. Lund, *The margins of orthodoxy : heterodox writing and cultural response, 1660-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 6.

[58] Michael Bryson, *The atheist Milton* (London, 2016), pp. 2, 18.

[59] Keith Thomas, *Religion and the decline of magic* (Harmonsworth, 1984), p. 202.

[60] Michael Hunter and David Wootton (ed), *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1992), p. 4.

The evidence from the plays broadly supports their chronology, although there are some earlier examples from the 1670s.

Fashionable atheism

Wootton also wrote that, after 1680 in England, atheism 'appears to have been fashionable and widely disseminated amongst the educated ruling class.'[61] One reason for this fashion was the perceived link between atheism and wit. The plays and other sources show that proclaiming atheism could be seen as an effective way of stimulating a reputation as a wit. In 1671 the conforming cleric Samuel Parker condemned 'these Apes of Wit' and feared that they 'would make Atheism the fashion forsooth, and Prophaneness the Character of a Gentleman'.[62] Glanvill saw these 'Fashionable ones … who do not Scoff at Religion out of enmity or malice, but out of modishness and compliance; and it may be, out of design to be accounted Wits for so doing.'[63] Edwards reported in 1695 that 'to ridicule religion, is counted one certain mark of a wit' and that 'it is grown Fashionable to deride whatever is Sacred, and to talk like an Atheist.' For some, atheism was seen as a badge of honour. Edwards saw 'some that pass for Wits, who strive for the honour of being accounted the most Able Atheists of the Age.'[64]

This idea of fashionable atheism is reflected in the plays. In *The Old Batchelor* (1693) by William Congreve, Bellmour refers to 'all our young Fellows' who 'glory in an opinion of Atheism'.[65] In *Sir Hercules Buffoon* (1684) by John Lacy, the title character is accused by his uncle of taking 'delight to be thought an Atheist, and a Wit forsooth', to which Sir Hercules replies that 'I confess I'd rather be thought an Atheist, than not a Wit … an Atheist and a Wit are incorporated, and like man and wife become one flesh.' His own eighteen-year-old son confirms his father's atheism by reporting that he has never seen Sir Hercules go to church.[66] Otway's play *The Atheist* will be examined more closely later, but one character should be introduced here – Daredevil, who glories in his atheism. He openly declares that he has 'no religion at all' and never goes to church, 'nor indeed at any other Worship these Twenty years.'; he says he is of 'the Religion of the Inner-Temple' as it is the fear of hanging, not the fear of hell, that motivates a person not to 'steal, or do murder, every time his Fingers itch't at it'; he condemns those who pretend religion, whereas it is 'Honest Atheism for my Money.';

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[61] Wootton, 'Unbelief in early modern Europe', p. 92.

[62] Samuel Parker, *A discourse of ecclesiastical politie* (London, 1671), pp. xxi-xxii.

[63] Joseph Glanvill, *Some discourses, sermons, and remains of the Reverend Mr. Jos. Glanvil ... collected into one volume* (London, 1681), p. 209.

[64] Edwards, *Some thoughts*, pp. 2, 130.

[65] William Congreve, *The old batchelour* (London, 1693), p. 29.

[66] John Lacy, *Sir Hercules Buffoon* (London, 1684), pp. 5-6, 15.

when asked what he thinks will happen when he dies, he answers that ‘I shall be buried six Foot under Ground, to prevent stinking, and there grow rotten.’[67] Daredevil wears his atheism with pride and clearly enjoys the attention this brings him in fashionable society.

Practical atheism

Practical atheism is manifested in some contrasting characters in plays by Sir John Vanbrugh. As well as being a playwright, Vanbrugh was a prominent architect and created some of the most iconic buildings of his age, including Blenheim Palace, Castle Howard, and the Queen’s Theatre in the Haymarket in London. He was staunchly Protestant and an early member of the Whig political and literary Kit-Cat Club, one of the aims of which was to help secure the Protestant succession. He was knighted by George I on his arrival at Greenwich in September 1714.[68] He left us eight original plays, the most enduring of which – *The Relapse* and *The Provok’d Wife* – are relevant here. Collier made Vanbrugh one of his primary targets in *A Short View* and attacked these two plays as being ‘particularly rampant and scandalous’ as well as being blasphemous and abusive of the clergy.[69] These accusations are not without foundation. Vanbrugh claimed, in his preface to *The Relapse*, that the play was so innocent it could sit comfortably next to a prayer-book on a lady’s bookshelf.[70] As we will see, however, there is such fierce anticlericalism and blatant disrespect for religion in these plays that it would not be unreasonable to suggest that there is a whiff of atheism in the air.

The Provok’d Wife presents us with characters who fulfil, with relish, the definition of practical atheists. This is exemplified by the names of the central character in the play and his two companions - Brute, Rake, and Bully. Sir John Brute goes to meet the others at a tavern with the intention of ‘playing the Devil tonight.’ When we see them in the tavern, they are already extremely drunk and disorderly (see Figure 7.1). Lord Rake plays the role of the lord of misrule and sings a song that explains that his interpretation of liberty of conscience is that he is free to do anything he wants without any religious restriction – ‘What e'er I devise, / Seems good in my Eyes, / And Religion ne'er dares to disturb me.’[71] Dabhoiwala makes the point that advocates of religious toleration at the time did not accept that freedom of conscience should extend to issues such as sexual freedom, but this restriction is of no interest to Rake.[72] They continue to ‘Drink away and be damn'd’, to ‘damn Morality’, and they ‘want time to be Lewd in.' When they hear that the streets are 'full of Drunken Citizens' they head out to make mischief.

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[67] Otway, *The atheist*, pp. 17-23.
[68] Kerry Downes, ‘Sir John Vanbrugh’ in *ODNB Online*, 28059.
[69] Collier, *A short view*, pp. 57, 84, 108.
[70] Vanbrugh, *The relapse*, ‘The preface’.
[71] Vanbrugh, *The provok'd wife*, pp. 28, 38.
[72] Dabhoiwala, 'Lust and liberty', p. 102.

Figure 7-1: *Carl Prekopp as Lord Rake in the RSC production of The Provoked Wife,* 2019.

Photo: Pete le May, www.rsc.org.uk/the-provoked-wife

The unrestricted sexual freedom claimed by these practical atheists reflects the concerns that atheism and immorality were closely connected at this time. When we see them next, they are in Covent Garden with swords drawn. It appears from the dialogue that they have attacked and seriously injured someone, and that the watch has been called. Brute is spoiling for a fight. They come across a tailor who is carrying a clergyman's gown. Rake suggests to Brute that, as he wouldn't hold back from abusing the clergy, he should dress himself in the gown when he attacks the watch. As Rake says, 'tho' the Blows fall upon you, the Scandal may light upon the Church.' When the watch arrives, Brute attacks the Constable. He is arrested and the others flee. The next morning, Brute is brought before the Justice. His attitude and language continue to be crude, leaving the officials so confused to hear such language from a parson that they release him. When asked by another character what he was doing last night Brute answers 'Why, I have been beating the Watch, and scandalizing the Clergy.'[73] This scene became controversial as attitudes changed in society. The play had occasional revivals during Queen Anne's reign, but then became a regular play in the repertoire with 31 performances between

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[73] Vanbrugh, *The provok'd wife*, pp. 37-39, 45, 54.

1715 and 1724. In 1726, however, Vanbrugh ‘was prevailed upon’ to change the scene so that Brute disguised himself not as a cleric but as a woman of quality.[74] This change maintained the scandalous nature of Brute’s behaviour but removed the element of anticlericalism. Raucous behaviour in the street and attacking an officer of the law remained acceptable in 1726, but doing such things in clerical clothing was not. Back in 1697, however, such anticlericalism was left uncensored. As one of the other characters in the play says ‘Religion's out of fashion!’, and Brute himself declares ‘'Tis a damn'd Atheistical Age’.[75]

In *The Relapse*, Vanbrugh develops the theme of anticlericalism by offering us a cleric who fits within the definition of a practical atheist. His clerical creation in this play, Chaplain Bull, is unquestionably debauched and ridiculous, as we saw in section 5.1. His gluttony and his irreligiosity are confirmed by the daughter of his employer who says that ‘he loves Eating, more than he loves his Bible’. His attitude to his responsibilities is equally relaxed. As we saw in section 5.1, he resorts to casuistry to justify the sanctioning of bigamy. There is little that is religious about Chaplain Bull. Young Fashion’s line ‘Thou may'st as well say I can't take Orders because I'm an Atheist’ implies that, even though he is putting the phrase to a metaphorical purpose, the idea of an atheist cleric is entirely feasible.[76] Vanbrugh attempted to clear himself of charges of ridiculing the clergy by stating that he has ‘all imaginable Deference’ for them but, as Anthony argues, these are ‘for the most part, feeble parryings.’[77]

Scoffers and drollers

Many scholars writing about atheism link it with wit, ridicule, and, to use a pervasive verb of the time, scoffing. Knights and Adam Morton identified the concerns of Archbishop Tillotson and others that scoffing at religion ‘shaded into irreligion and atheism.’[78] John Redwood reports that many contemporaries were agreed that the greatest threat to religion came from the wits and libertines.[79] Lund observes that two prominent anti-atheists, Joseph Glanvill and Bishop Warburton, believed that ‘ridicule is inherently more dangerous than reasoned argument’ and Morton observes that orthodox critics saw laughter as ‘the calling-card of sin’.[80]

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[74] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*; Cibber and Fone, *An apology for the life of Colley Cibber*, p. 309.

[75] Vanbrugh, *The provok'd wife*, pp. 16, 62.

[76] Vanbrugh, *The relapse*, pp. 8, 66-67.

[77] John Vanbrugh, *A short vindication of The relapse and The provok'd wife from immorality and prophaneness by the author* (London, 1698), p. 30; Anthony, *Collier*, p. 100.

[78] Mark Knights & Adam Morton, ‘Introduction: Laughter and Satire in Early Modern Britain 1500–1800’ in Knights and Morton (ed), *The power of laughter*, p. 11.

[79] John Redwood, *Reason, ridicule and religion : the age of enlightenment in England, 1660-1750* (London, 1976), p. 15.

[80] Lund, *The margins of orthodoxy*, p. 171; Morton, ‘Laughter as a polemical act in late seventeenth-century England’ in Knights and Morton (ed), *The power of laughter*, p. 113.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, concerns about unorthodox religion were linked with wider political concerns. Redwood draws a connecting line between raillery, laughter, and the erosion of forms of authority and asks 'amid this laughter what might happen to the Church of England, to the political system, to the social fabric?'[81] In a 1681 pamphlet, Glanvill wrote that atheists 'are the common Foes, enemies not only to Religion, but to all Government, and Societies'.[82] Redwood also argues that the atheist-hunters were far more concerned by the 'insidious growth' of 'the incursion being made by irony, wit, and ridicule' than they were by developments in science or ideas about reason. He says that they were concerned that 'it was possible to make fun of God's cosmos … in the space of five minutes of theatre jests'.[83] One of the characters in Benjamin Griffin's *The Masquerade* (1717) explains that he does not want to be seen as a wit because – 'your Wits, now a Days, are the most ridiculous Part of Mankind; censorious, scurrilous, and ill-manner'd to the last Degree: Bright in nothing but their scoffing at Religion and Government, or defending Atheism and abusing the Clergy.'[84] Parker asserted that wits 'can scarce meet with a Clergy-man, but they must be pelting him with Oaths, or Ribaldry, or Atheistical Drollery'.[85]

Most people in the period felt a respect for religion and its institutions - even a fear of them. The Court Wits, however, were not inhibited by religion. For them, life was a game, and that applied to religion too. In their plays the Wits frequently used religious language metaphorically and this gave rise to a lively debate between two leading scholars in the 1980s. Douglas Canfield offered a model for considering religious language in the plays of this period. He identified two dichotomies – that religious language in the plays is either casual or purposeful and, if it is purposeful, it is either ironic or literal. He goes on to argue that it can be all these things at the same time and that critics who 'deny that it does, who reduce it to mere wit and irony' are restricting the richness of the plays. He sees religious language as 'typically casual and ironic in the mouths of the characters but purposeful and ultimately literal in the pen of the author', and that such language has religious meaning that establishes traditional Christian values.[86] Hughes countered that 'such readings pay virtually no attention to the dramatic context of the images' and I agree with his argument that they miss the crucial way in which 'religious imagery describes the social game rather than the cosmic order.'[87] I do not share Canfield's view that there is a religious purpose in this language or that it seeks to support Christian values. I see most of this language as being dramatically purposeful but religiously casual, in the sense that it is used to great dramatic effect but without any respect or concern for religious sensibilities.

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[81] Redwood, *Reason, ridicule and religion*, p. 183.

[82] Joseph Glanvill, *The zealous, and impartial Protestant shewing some great, but less heeded dangers of popery, in order to thorough and effectual security against it* (London, 1681), p. 44.

[83] Redwood, *Reason, ridicule and religion*, p. 14.

[84] Benjamin Griffin, *The masquerade* (London, 1717), p. 4.

[85] Parker, *A discourse of ecclesiastical politie*, p. xxxii.

[86] J. Douglas Canfield, 'Religious language and religious meaning in Restoration comedy', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* Vol. 20 (1980), pp. 385-406, pp. 385, 406.

There is also a playfulness in the Wits' engagement with religion and Mikhail Bakhtin's ideas about carnival are relevant here. Although he sees carnival as participatory rather than the spectator format of the theatre, his idea that laughter can create freedom from 'all religious and ecclesiastic dogmatism' is reflected in the lack of inhibition in the way religious language is used by the Wits in their comedies. Bakhtin sees all carnival forms as being 'systematically placed outside the Church and religiosity' and I believe that we should see the plays of the Wits as carnivalesque and irreligious.[88] The *OED* defines 'irreligion' as 'hostility to or disregard of religious principles'.[89] Such hostility does not automatically imply disbelief, but these terms sit close together on the spectrum.

An important part of the game of life for the Wits was, of course, sex. Many of the religious metaphors and similes in the plays written by the Wits appear in dialogue where the primary theme is sexual. In section 2.1 we saw the extensive use of religious language in sexual skirmishing in Etherege's *The Man of Mode*. In the light of the sexually charged nature of this language, it is difficult to argue, as Canfield does, that Etherege is seeking to establish a context of traditional Christian values.[90] This linkage of religious language with sexual energy could be seen as playing against such values. For Hughes, *The Man of Mode* represents 'a comprehensive disintegration of the Christian social order'.[91] It can also be seen as reflecting one of the paradoxes of the age – that the head of the Church of England was an unconcealed adulterer. Charles II's notorious sexual activity could be seen as placing him within the definition of a practical atheist. It is not surprising that it was reported that 'the entire court went three or four times to see' the play.[92]

Religion and sex are also entwined in a play by another of the Court Wits - William Wycherley. In *The Country Wife* (1675) when Harcourt disguises himself as a chaplain to gain access to Alithea and to keep alive his chance of securing her for himself, by presiding over her mock marriage to Sparkish. He uses religious language that can be understood on two levels –

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[87] Derek Hughes, 'Play and passion in "The man of mode"', *Comparative Drama,* 15 (1981), pp. 231-57, pp. 246-247.
[88] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, p. 7.
[89] *OED*, 'irreligion'.
[90] Canfield, 'Religious language', p. 385.
[91] Derek Hughes, 'Naming and entitlement in Wycherley, Etherege, and Dryden', *Comparative Drama,* 21 (1987), pp. 259-89, p. 266.
[92] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. 440.

by Alithea as an expression of his love for her, and by Sparkish as a demonstration of his piety: ‘With all my soul, Divine, Heavenly Creature’ and ‘Seraphick Lady’ and ‘I desire nothing more than to marry you presently’. His private thoughts also make use of religious language: ‘a reprieve for a day only, often revokes a hasty doom; at worst, if she will not take mercy on me, and let me marry her’.[93] The casual nature of Wycherley’s irreligious attitude is also shown in a brief exchange. Horner and Dorilant discuss examples that prove that ‘Most Men are the contraries to that they wou'd seem’. They produce a long list of such examples, including ‘your Church-man, the greatest Atheist’.[94] Collier emphasised this line as a major error, but to Wycherley it was just one casual example amidst a long list of others. Unlike some of his fellow Wits, Wycherley does not appear to have responded to Collier.[95] And it was not only the Church of England that Wycherley treated with disdain. In *Love in a Wood* (1672), the playhouse is described as the ‘Meeting-house of the Wicked’.[96] By using the nonconformist place of worship as a metaphor for the wicked playhouse, Wycherley shows that his disdain is denominationally indiscriminate.

Reserved atheists

As well as the use of religious language, some plays also show us examples of a different kind of casual irreligiosity – the attitude of characters whose religion is of secondary, and even negligible, importance compared to the acquisition of money, power, and an easy life. In earlier chapters we saw how Scruple in *The Cheats* is prepared to sell his religious loyalty to the highest bidder; in *The Quaker’s Wedding*, Sir Feeble Goodwill needs to marry money and is prepared to become a Quaker to achieve this; later in this chapter we will see how Beaugard in *The Atheist* would conform to any religion for the sake of a pleasant life. The epitome of this religious promiscuity can be seen in the title character in Durfey’s *Sir Barnaby Whigg* (1681). He is described as willing to ‘change his Opinion as easily as his Coat’ and admits that his soul is ‘always in the heart of the City—in Lumbard street.’ He starts the play as a nonconformist and member of the Church-Militant but, when he hears a rumour that power is shifting towards the Church of England, he decides he will conform and impeach his ‘quondam Brethren’. The play was first performed in the autumn of 1681 when, in the wake of the discrediting of the Popish Plot, power was shifting towards the Tories and against nonconformists. This change of coat is, however, only the first of Sir Barnaby’s transformations. When he tells Wilding that he is now fixed in his conformity and ‘I love Bishops with all my heart’, Wilding decides to play a trick on him by getting his footman Swift to disguise himself as a Catholic priest. Swift persuades Sir Barnaby that a very wealthy widow is in love with him. Although she is the niece of the Grand Vizier, Swift says she is a devout Catholic and causes Sir Barnaby serious discomfort by asking what his religion is. He doesn’t get a straight answer and so he says that only a ‘honest, godly Roman Catholick’ will win her. Sir Barnaby immediately declares that he has ‘ever lov'd and honour'd’ the pope. But yet another trap has been laid for him - a letter arrives from her uncle, without whose consent she cannot marry, saying that any future husband must ‘immediately turn Musselman’. Sir Barnaby immediately says he will ‘turn Turk’. He shamelessly admits his religious promiscuity by adding that ‘I'le turn Turk, man, Jew, Moor, Græcian, anything: Pox on't, I'le not lose a Lady, and such a sum for the sake of any Religion under the Sun’.[97] He then adds that he will fight for the Turks in the forthcoming battle, whereupon Wilding and the Justice (who have been eavesdropping) emerge and Sir Barnaby is arrested for treason.

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[93] Wycherley, *The country wife*, pp. 56-58.
[94] Ibid., pp. 8-9.
[95] Collier, *A short view*, p. 100.
[96] William Wycherley, *Love in a wood* (London, 1672), p. 39.

The idea that such religious flexibility was not uncommon at the time is shown in a brief exchange after Sir Barnaby has been taken away. Wilding asks ‘Was there ever such a Rascal?’ and his friend answers ‘Yes, Thousands in their hearts’.[98] This attitude was also observed by Settle in the dedication of his play *The Female Prelate* to the Earl of Shaftesbury. Settle categorizes Shaftesbury’s enemies and describes as one category as

> the ambitious Libertine, who always sides with the Rising Party; who tho indeed he is of no faith at all, yet appears as zealous for a Religion of Quality, as a Spanish Jew at Mass, and rather than stand out when his interest is at stake, would e’en turn Mahometan, and almost circumcise to the Great.[99]

When attitudes to the Popish Plot were changing, one of the satirical accusations against Titus Oates was his religious flexibility. Figure 7-2 shows us Oates dressed half as a Jesuit and half as a Muslim. The final lines of the caption reflect Sir Barnaby’s promiscuity – ‘Quaker, Presbyter, Musulman, Jesuite’.

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[97] Thomas Durfey, *Sir Barnaby Whigg* (London, 1681), pp. 10, 30, 41, 49, 50.

[98] Ibid., p. 51.

[99] Settle, *Prelate*, ‘Epistle dedicatory’.

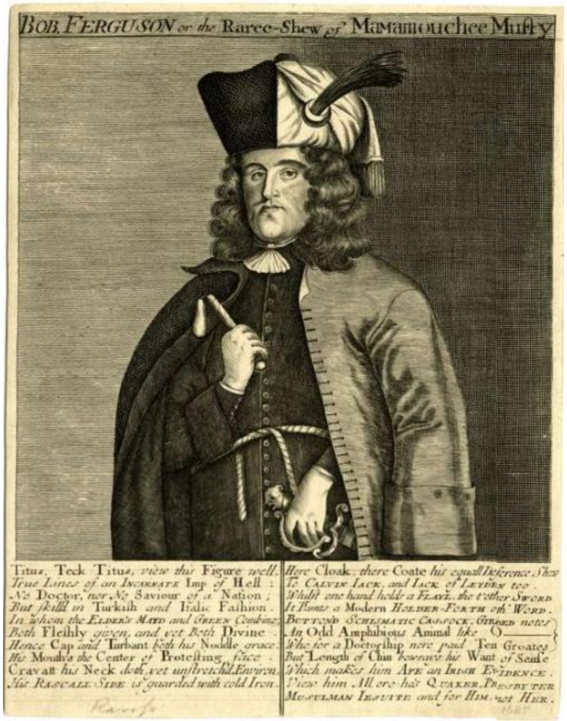
BOB FERGUSON or the Raree-Shew of Mamamouchee Mufty
Titus, Teck Titus, view this Figure well.
True Lines of an Incarnate Imp of Hell :
No Doctor, nor No Saviour of a Nation ;
But ſkill'd in Turkiſh and Italic Faſhion .
In whom the Elder's Maid and Green Combine;
Both Fleſhly given, and yet Both Divine .
Hence Cap and Turbant both his Noddle grace:
His Mouth's the Center of Proteſting face .
Cravatt his Neck doth yet unſtretch'd Environ.
His Rascall Side is guarded with cold Iron.
Here Cloak, there Coate his equall Deference Show
To Calvin Jack, and Jack of Leyden too .
Whilst one hand holds a Flail, the t'other Sword
It Points a Modern Holder-Forth o'th' Word .
Button'd Schismatic Cassock, Girded notes
An Odd Amphibious Animal like O———
Who for a Doctorſhip nere paid Ten Groates
But Length of Chin bewrays his Want of Senſe
Which makes him Are an Irish Evidence .
View him All ore-ha's Quaker, Presbyter
Musulman Jesuite and for Him not Her .

Figure 7-2: *Bob Ferguson or the Raree-Show of Mamamouchee Mufty*, c. 1685.

Anonymous, BM 1868,0808.3302.

Social conformity

We turn now to those who may have had a casual attitude to theology, but who believed in the social importance of conforming to the established church. In *The Relapse,* Lord Foppington sees his visits to church as a social rather than a religious experience. His choice of church is based on 'much the best Company' and, when asked about the sermon, shows his real interest in the experience of being at church by answering 'Why Faith, Madam,---I can't tell. A Man must have very little to do there, that can give an account of the Sermon'.[100] Both Wootton and Sarah Ellenzweig argue that there were atheists who believed that the Church was essential for maintaining the social and political fabric of the nation, and so they chose to conceal their atheism and/or refrained from attacking the Church.[101] The most interesting example of social conformity brings us, once again, to *The Atheist.* The play introduces characters whose true religious positions lie hidden, even from themselves.

The main plot of the play is a story of a marriage-hater-matched, a plot device seen elsewhere in Restoration drama, but it is not the main plot that is relevant to this chapter. Beaugard and his friend Daredevil do not adopt disguises or wear masks or seek to hide their identities. In their very different ways, however, they both have hidden religious positions. In contrast to his friend Daredevil, Beaugard presents himself as a conformist – in the first scene he says he loves conformity. But, for Beaugard, religion is no more than a social requirement and, as long as he can meet society's expectations, he does not trouble his mind with religious matters. This attitude is clear from the first mention of religion in the play. Beaugard is arguing with his father about his unwillingness to marry and his father poses him a rhetorical question: 'What Religion are you of?'. Beaugard gives what he considers to be a sufficiently satisfactory answer – 'Sir, I hope you took care, after I was born, to see me Christen'd', thus shifting religious responsibility off his own shoulders and on to his father's. This prompts the father to call his son an 'atheistical rogue'. As his father points out, Beaugard believes he only needs to call himself a Christian to be one. His father presses the point and eventually Beaugard declares that he sees conformity to the religion of his country as no more than 'going to Church once a Month'. The implication is that, if he lived in a country with a different confession, he would conform to that without difficulty. The issue of occasional conformity was highly contentious at this time. It was used by some nonconformists who needed to demonstrate a minimum of conformity in order to hold public positions, but whose religious beliefs would not allow them to conform more regularly. In the case of Beaugard, his occasional conformity was not a matter of religious belief. His ambition in life is entirely areligious – 'to make this transitory Life as pleasant and delightful as I can'. He even indulges in a little religious flirtation by criticising Daredevil for his absence with a challenge that the conformist would have found alarming – 'I shall never be converted from Christianity, if thou dost not mind thy Bus'ness better.'[102]

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[100] Vanbrugh, *The relapse*, p. 32. The pagination awry here – this should probably be p. 30.
[101] Wootton, 'Unbelief in early modern Europe', p. 88; Sarah Ellenzweig, *The fringes of belief English literature, ancient heresy, and the politics of freethinking, 1660-1760* (Stanford, Calif., 2008), pp. 2-3.

Beaugard reveals to society the bare minimum of religious conformity to ensure that he can live his pleasurable and delightful life. What lies hidden behind this conformity is not a sense of religious belief and commitment, but a religious void. Being a committed Christian would have been too much like hard work for Beaugard and being a self-proclaimed atheist would have been far too troublesome. Munns coins an interesting phrase to describe Beaugard's attitude to religion as one of 'weary negligence'. I would go further. As we will see in the next section, Daredevil has a deep fear of damnation and eventually recants. This disqualifies him, in my view, from being the title character of this play. I share Canfield's view that the real atheist of the title is Beaugard. Munns disagrees with Canfield and places Beaugard in 'a less radical position committed neither to belief nor to disbelief.'[103] Her argument implies that the definition of atheism is an explicit declaration of disbelief. To make such a declaration in the period was rare and could have been dangerous. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to adopt a more flexible interpretation - that the absence of a commitment to any religious belief could be a sufficient definition of atheism. Under this definition, Beaugard is clearly an atheist.

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[102] Otway, *The atheist*, pp. 2-3, 17.

[103] Jessica Munns, 'Change, skepticism, and uncertainty', p. 154; J. Douglas Canfield, 'Thomas Otway' in Paula R. Backscheider (ed), *Restoration and eighteenth-century dramatists, first series* (Detroit, MI, 1989), p. 168; Munns, *The plays of Thomas Otway*, p. 86.

Recanting atheists

In *The English Frier* (see section 4.2), we saw a dissimulated deathbed conversion put to a good purpose. In this section, a range of conversions are examined – from deceptive to genuine. In Act Five of *The Atheist*, Daredevil presents us with the image of a recanting atheist, who also appears to be dying. We have already heard Daredevil's protestations of atheism, but earlier in the play we hear from Beaugard that Daredevil is a 'faux Atheist' and that he 'never feels so much as an Ague-fit, but he's afraid of being damn'd'. This view is confirmed later in the play when Daredevil is wounded in a swordfight and believes he is dying and will be in hell within a few hours. He calls for 'some Conscientious Godly Divine to unburden myself of my iniquity to' and he admits to being 'tormented with the stings of a terrify'd Conscience.' But the confessor who turns up is Beaugard's father 'disguis'd like a Phanatique Preacher', and we discover that Daredevil's wound is no more than a scratch. But, by then, the 'deathbed' confession has been made. When he discovers that he is not dying, Daredevil feebly attempts a retraction, but the play ends before we can see how he might have dealt with this contradiction, thus leaving him with his true beliefs exposed.[104] In *The Atheist*, Otway presents us with an atheist who turns out to be intensely religious and a conformist who has no religious belief. By setting these characters within a world of masquerade, Otway creates a complex environment for considering the ways in which atheism and irreligiosity can be defined.

Another apparently recanting, and apparently dying, atheist can be seen in the character of Florio in Crowne's *City Politiques.* In contrast to Daredevil, it is clear to the audience that Florio is dissembling both his illness and his penitence. In the cast list, he is described as "A Debauch, who pretends to be Dying of the Diseases his Vices brought upon him, and penitent". He refers to his old friends as his 'Atheistical Companions' and describes himself as having been 'King of Libertines'. At the start of the play, he has abandoned his libertine lifestyle to pursue the object of his love, as we saw in section 3.2. But, to him, this new life is 'a dismal Purgatory' – an interesting use of religious language to describe an irreligious condition. He is described as 'a very witty man, and a wicked man too once, but now the most penitent creature in the world, and he had need be so, he is going out of it, he cannot live many Months.'[105] His dissimulation convinces everyone – except, of course, the audience. This portrayal of a link between atheism and dissimulation plays into one of the tropes of the period.

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[104] Otway, *The atheist*, pp. 7, 17, 68-74.

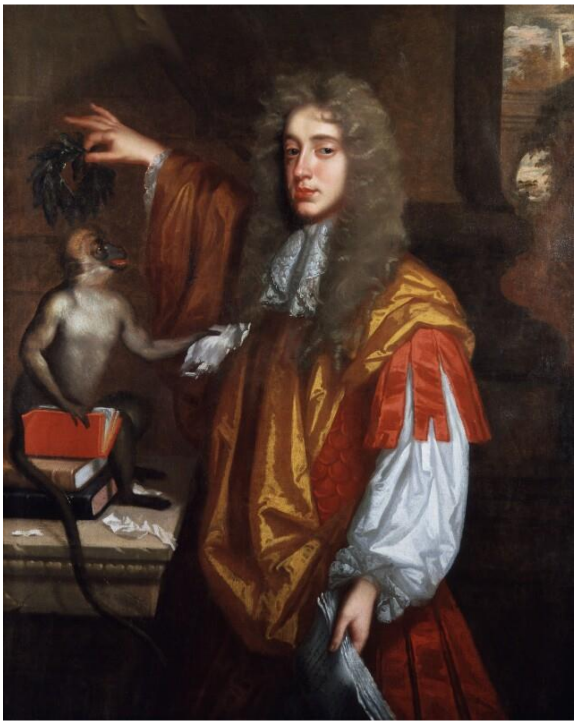

Figure 7-3: *John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester*, c. 1665-1670. Unknown artist, NPG, 804.

Hidden within these two plays are possible allusions to a character from the real world. There has been scholarly debate about Otway's model for Daredevil. Munns summarises the arguments made by others (J.C. Ross and Robert Hume, in particular) that fellow playwright Thomas Shadwell was Otway's target, before concluding that it is the Earl of Rochester (see Figure 7-3), famous for his atheism and his deathbed conversion, who lies hidden within this play.[106] I agree with her conclusion and I also believe, as does Anthony Kaufman, that the dissembling Florio can also be included in this comparison.[107] The contrast between previous wickedness and present penitence reflects the approach used by the writers of the deathbed narratives of the Earl of Rochester to emphasise the importance of his conversion. Crowne emphasises the wickedness - one of Florio's 'atheistical companions' impersonates Florio and confesses his previously wicked life in detail:

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[105] Crowne, *City politiques*, 'Dramatis Personæ', pp. 2, 3, 23, 36.

[106] Jessica Munns, 'Daredevil in Thomas Otway's "The atheist:" A new identification', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700,* 11 (1987), pp. 31-38.

[107] Anthony Kaufman, 'Civil politics-Sexual politics in John Crowne's "City politiques"', ibid.6 (1982), pp. 72-80, pp. 77-78.

> I have not only debauch'd Women, but the whole Age, poyson'd all its Morals, murder'd thousands o' young Consciences, sung others asleep, pump'd others with Drunkenness, Sin I Honour'd and Priviledg'd as a Peer to the Devil, Heaven I affronted, Libell'd his Court, and in my drunken Altitudes have endeavour'd to scour the whole Creation of Souls and Spirits, now is it fit I shou'd be sav'd?[108]

City Politiques was written less than two years after the death of Rochester, and not everyone had accepted the genuineness of Rochester's conversion. Crowne's play added fuel to that fire by making it clear that Florio was dissembling his conversion. For at least one of Rochester's supporters this was too much to bear. A few days after the first performance, Crowne was 'cudgelled' in St Martin's Lane by someone who said that he 'did it at the suite of the Earle of Rochester some time since deceased who was greatly abused in the play for his penetency'.[109]

Heterodox Christians

We have now reached the point on the spectrum where the label of atheism was used as a term of abuse against people who probably identified as Christians. Very few groups outside the established Church escaped such accusations. Redwood attributes the increase in accusations of atheism after the Restoration to the quarrels between clerics, and that these embittered disputes often resulted in accusations of atheism against opponents and disrupted Christian harmony in general.[110] Some of the targets of these attacks were the Freethinkers and Deists who, in their turn, attacked what they saw as 'the corrupt priestcraft of established religion.'[111]

Drawing parallels between heterodox beliefs and atheism was one method of attacking dissenters. Glanvill saw a close connection between nonconformity and atheism. He described an atheist, with whom he was having an argument, as having 'run through the several stages of modern sects, not stopping until he came down to that sink of folly, and madness, Quakerism, and thence made a leap into Atheism, which is no great leap'.[112] Others saw a connection between atheism and Catholicism, and some lumped together all those who did not accept the conformist view. Sarah Cowper, for example, saw the Church of England as a 'Beseig'd Citty hemm'd in on all Parts by the Impudence of Atheism, the Insolencies of

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[108] Crowne, *City politiques*, p. 53.
[109] Spurr (ed), *The entring book of Roger Morrice: The reign of Charles II, 1677-1685*, p. 345.
[110] Redwood, *Reason, ridicule and religion*, p. 36.
[111] Champion, *The pillars of priestcraft shaken*, 'Abstract'.
[112] Glanvill, *A blow at modern Sadducism*, p. 158.

Popery and the Turbulency of Faction'.[113] This scattergun approach was itself subject to criticism. In his 1719 play *Sir Walter Raleigh*, George Sewell wrote, 'But 'tis the Curse, and Fashion of the Times: / When Prejudice and strong Aversions work, / All whose Opinions we dislike are Atheists'.[114] Even the anti-atheist Edwards observed that the accusations of atheism were being too liberally used: 'There are some deluded People who are apt to censure all as Atheists that are not of their way … There are those that call all Persons Atheists and Hypocrites that hold not the same Principles with themselves.'[115]

Accusations of atheism are almost promiscuous in *The Lancashire Witches*. The first appearance is as early as page two when the chaplain Smerk accuses Sir Edward Harfort of atheism because restrictions are put on his role as a chaplain. Later in Act One, Smerk accuses Sir Edward of atheism because he does not believe in witches: 'Heaven defend! will you deny the existence of Witches? 'Tis very Atheistical.' Sir Edward issues a counter-accusation of atheism because Smerk ranks the power of the devil the same as God's. Smerk repeats his accusation of Sir Edward when he is alone with Isabella. Smerk condemns the lovers Bellfort and Doubty (after they have left the stage) as 'damn'd Hobbists and Atheists' and later repeats the accusation to their faces. Smerk also condemns those members of Parliament who believe in the Popish Plot as 'Phanaticks, Hobbists, and Atheists'.[116]

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As we have seen, when atheism is viewed across the spectrum, it is everywhere – in the theatre, in the court, and in the population at large. This is, of course, a London-centric perspective and may not be applicable across the rest of the country. Looking over the whole period, however, we can see that, whether the dramatists were atheists or were antagonistic towards religion, the way that religion and religious characters are portrayed in the plays is, with only a few exceptions, entirely negative. It would be an exaggeration to say that the entire period was, as Brute described it, an atheistical age, but we have seen many examples in the plays that support Brute's assertion. On that basis, perhaps we can say that, to some extent, there was an atheistical stage.

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[113] Quoted in Knights, *The devil in disguise*, p. 162.

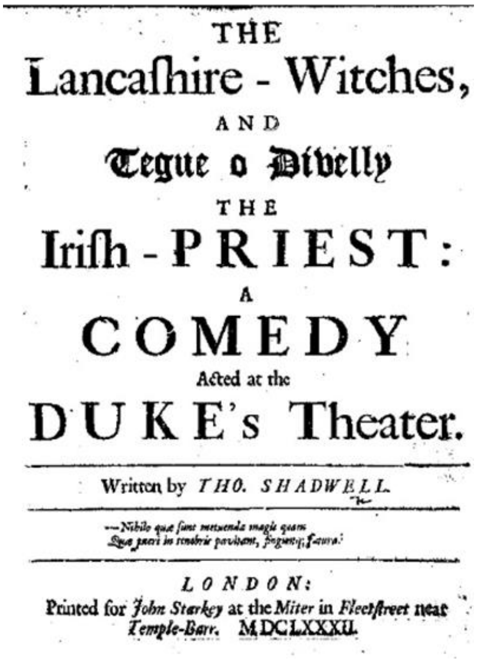
[114] George Sewell, *Sir Walter Raleigh* (London, 1719), p. 5.

[115] Edwards, *Some thoughts*, p. 132. Pagination is awry here.

[116] Shadwell, *Witches*, pp. 2, 9, 16, 24, 36, 56.

8 *THE LANCASHIRE WITCHES*

Up to this point, the thesis has adopted a wide focus. It has looked across a long period and at a rich variety of plays. This chapter takes a different approach by focusing on a single play in more depth. Thomas Shadwell described his 1681 play *The Lancashire Witches and Tegue O Divelly the Irish Priest* as a comedy, and so it is. It also has drama, farce, sex, violence, politics, mistaken identity, romance, and witches. I have chosen this play for closer scrutiny because its theatricality is matched by its richness as a source for the exploration of many of the themes of the thesis - there is disguise, hypocrisy, and immorality, and the two clerics in the play reflect the characteristics of anticlericalism that we have seen in earlier chapters – and take them to new heights. The play was included in the exploration of censorship in section 2.4 and this chapter will look in detail at the reasons for the cuts imposed on the play. The chapter also introduces a new topic – witchcraft. The conflicting attitudes to witchcraft belief in the play touch on wider issues around toleration, and reflects the establishment's perception of a dangerous connection between witchcraft, scepticism and atheism.


THE
Lancaſhire - Witches,
AND
Tegue o Divelly
THE
Iriſh - PRIEST:
A
COMEDY
Acted at the
DUKE's Theater.

Written by *THO. SHADWELL.*

---Nihilo quæ ſunt metuenda magis quam
Quæ pueri in tenebris pavitant, finguntq; futura.

LONDON:
Printed for *John Starkey* at the *Miter* in *Fleetſtreet* near
Temple-Barr. MDCLXXXII.

Figure 8-1: Title page of *The Lancashire Witches* (London, 1682).

8.1 The play and its time

The Lancashire Witches has met with mixed reviews, both at the time and in modern criticism. The first production of the play at the Duke's Theatre in London was considered a success and yielded 'great profits.'[117] John Downes reported in 1708 that it was 'very beneficial to the Poet and Actors', included 'severall Machines of Flyings for the Witches, and other Diverting Contrivances', and was 'well perform'd'.[118] The play had longevity and there is evidence of three possible revivals in the 1690s.[119] Among modern critics, Hume finds the play 'spirited', but Hughes calls it a 'feeble piece'.[120] At the time, the play was seen as highly political and as 'a provocative piece of Whig propaganda.' Shadwell was a strong supporter of the Whig position in this highly fractious period – Alan Fisher calls him the 'Laureate of Whiggery'.[121]

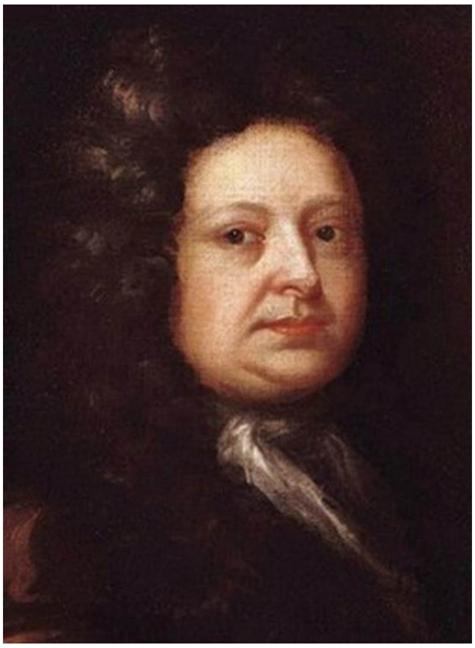


Figure 8-2: *Thomas Shadwell*, 1690. An unknown artist, NPG, 4143.

The Whigs in the play are seen as rational, tolerant, and socially superior, while the conforming clergy, Catholics, and the Tory gentry are portrayed with negative characteristics such as superstition, social inferiority, credulity, hypocrisy, fanaticism, and bigotry. These characterisations are the mirror image of those used by Tory dramatists and this reflects Owen's observation that Shadwell and others made their political arguments by reversing the tropes found in other plays.[122] Shadwell wrote 'all run now into Politicks' and I agree with Fisher's argument that politics are central to Shadwell's work, and his argument that politics and ideas 'guide Shadwell in every aesthetic choice he makes.'[123] I will argue, however, that Shadwell's aesthetic choices in *The Lancashire Witches* were also driven by his sense of drama and what would make a good play and attract and entertain audiences. The primary example of Shadwell's sense of drama is the use of 'Diverting Contrivances' to present a realistic portrayal of the witches, and this has attracted much critical attention. It is argued by some scholars that this undermines the sceptical philosophy both of Shadwell himself, and those characters in the play with whom Shadwell wishes to identify. Munns summarises the problem in this question: 'why set up a character as positive exemplar of skeptical rationalism - which also underlies his Whig politics - only to demonstrate the inadequacies of his philosophic system and, in the process, undercut his politics?'[124] Hume believes this problem 'has to bother even a casual viewer.'[125] Marsden argues that the problem means that 'the play's political message is clouded'.[126] Munns disagrees with Marsden and argues that the play is 'clear, Whig, and unambiguous.'[127] I will argue that this issue has been over-problematised by critics and that, although the censored performance text may contain some ambiguities, Shadwell's message of witchcraft scepticism comes through loud and clear to the reader of the published uncensored edition.

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[117] Robert D. Hume, *The development of English drama in the late seventeenth century* (Oxford, 1976), p. 358.
[118] Downes, Milhous and Hume, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 80.
[119] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, pp. 387, 432, 479.
[120] Hume, *The development of English drama in the late seventeenth century*, p. 358; Hughes, *English drama*, p. 235.
[121] Owen, *Crisis*, p. 185; Alan S. Fisher, 'The significance of Thomas Shadwell', *Studies in Philology,* 71 (1974), pp. 225-46, p. 246.
[122] Owen, *Crisis*, p. 188.

The Plot

A summary of the plot may be helpful at this point. Sir Edward Harfort is planning to marry his son and daughter to the daughter and son of a local justice Sir Jeffrey Shaklehead. The two daughters, Isabella and Theodosia, are friends and 'Women of good Humour, Wit, and Beauty'. They agree that they will 'mutiny' and refuse to marry their fathers' choices who are Young Harfort - 'A Clownish, sordid, Country Fool, that loves nothing but drinking Ale, and Country Sports' – and Sir Timothy Shaklehead - 'a very pert, confident, simple Fellow' who Isabella treats with contempt and physical abuse. The daughters hope for rescue by two young men Bellfort and Doubty, who they had met on a previous occasion. The development of this problem is the main plot of the play. The witches, who live in Sir Edward's cellar, intervene regularly throughout the play. Their first intervention is to conjure a storm that results in Bellfort and Doughty seeking refuge at Sir Edward's house, where both Isabella and Theodosia are staying. Smerk, Sir Edward's conformist chaplain, attempts to woo Isabella and is attacked in a similar manner to Sir Timothy. Smerk is then enticed by the maid Susan who, when he spurns her, says she will seek help from the witches to get her revenge. Tegue O Devilly, an Irish Catholic Priest, arrives and offers to exorcize the witches from Sir Edward's house, but Sir Edward does not believe in the existence of witches, a view shared by Bellfort and Doughty. The play turns into a farce in Act Four and the sexual temperature rises. Lady Shaklehead falls in love with Doubty, and Smerk is 'enflamed' with affection for Susan. There is a series of farcical scenes in the semi-darkness of the gallery of Sir Edward's house, involving exits and entrances into various bedrooms during which Tegue has sex with a witch, Mother Dickenson, believing her to be one of 'de pretty Wenches, doe walke here in de dark at night'. Smerk is attempting to get Susan into bed when Isabella and Theodosia, dressed as witches, frighten them away. The four young lovers then confess to their parents that they have married secretly. The Shakleheads leave the stage intent on revenge, but Sir Edward gives his blessing. Smerk and Susan also declare that they have married, and a messenger arrives with a warrant for the arrest of Tegue, who is charged with involvement in the Popish Plot. [128]

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[123] Shadwell, *Witches*, 'To the reader'; Fisher, 'The significance of Thomas Shadwell', p. 230.

[124] Jessica Munns, '"The golden days of Queen Elizabeth": Thomas Shadwell's "The Lancashire-witches" and the politics of nostalgia', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700,* 20 (1996), pp. 195-216, p. 198.

[125] Hume, *The development of English drama in the late seventeenth century*, p. 358.

[126] Quoted in Munns, 'Golden Days', p. 199.

[127] Ibid., p. 208.

Political and religious background

The play was first performed in 1681. The London Stage reports that it was 'probably first given in September, certainly no later than October'. Others place it as early as March.[129] This lack of clarity about the date of the premiere is important as 1681 saw a significant shift in the balance of political power in England (see section 1.2). The political and religious context for the play is the Popish Plot and the Succession Crisis. The play is not allegorical as it contains many direct references to the Popish Plot and, at the end of the play, the Catholic priest is arrested for taking part in the Plot. But, by the time the play was first performed, the power balance was shifting away from the Whigs. It is possible that *The Lancashire Witches* was performed earlier in the year when a Whiggish attitude would have seemed more in tune with the political climate but, if it was not performed until the autumn, it would have been a much more controversial event. This was a dangerous time to be defiant. Stephen College, the poet and political activist, was a fierce supporter of the campaign to exclude the Duke of York from the throne, and was an associate of Shaftesbury and Titus Oates. He produced visual satires as well as fiery words, and both were included in his 1681 pamphlet *A Ra-Ree Show*, which itself reflected a form of popular drama (see *Figure 8-3*). College chose to give a very theatrical public performance of this ballad in Oxford at the same moment that Charles II was dissolving

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[128] Shadwell, *Witches*, 'Drammatis Personae', p. 59.

[129] Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. 301; Downes, Milhous and Hume, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 80(n).

Parliament - an event that took place in a theatre.[130] It was College's performance in Oxford that was used by his enemies to secure his conviction and execution for high treason in August 1681.

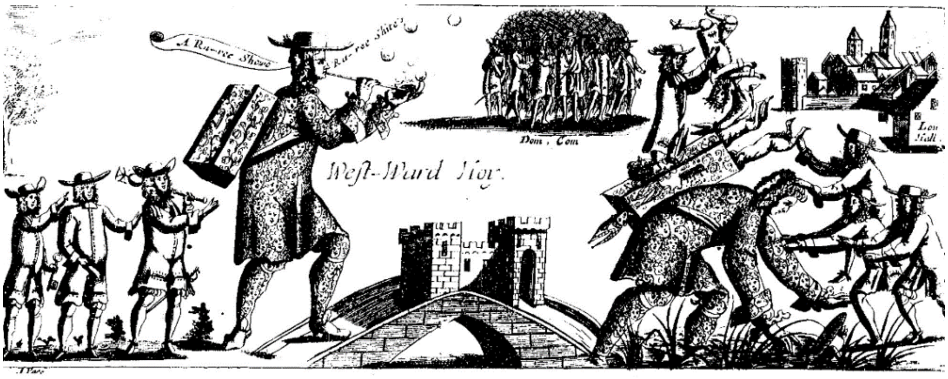

Figure 8-3: *A Ra-ree Show*. Stephen College (London, 1681).[131]

Shadwell did not suffer the same fate as College, whose reckless behaviour had made him a marked man. Shadwell would have been aware that this play was in risky territory, and he had a better sense of how to avoid crossing the line. It is clear from his introduction that Shadwell believed that the greatest peril he needed to avoid was an accusation of atheism. As mentioned in section 2.4, Shadwell adopted a policy of self-censorship on the subject of witchcraft, and whether the witches in the play were seen as 'real'. If his disbelief had been made explicit in the play, 'it would have been call'd Atheistical … and by this means the Play might have been Silenced.'[132]

8.2 Witchcraft

The witchcraft debate was still very much alive in 1681 when *The Lancashire Witches* was first performed, so this section begins with an overview of the presence of witchcraft in the plays and in wider society.

The debate between witchcraft believers and sceptics cut across political and religious lines, with some religious and political opponents being united in their views on this subject.[133] Witchcraft scepticism was on the rise at this time, and Diane Purkiss believes that drama had some effect on this development.[134] Belief in witchcraft, however, remained strong amongst the population at large.[135] The case for witchcraft belief was highlighted by Joseph Glanvill, late Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty and Fellow of the Royal Society, in his pamphlet *Saducismus Triumphatus* (1681) which offered ‘Full and Plain Evidence … of their Real Existence.’[136] Shadwell’s concern about being labelled as an atheist followed the train of thought that caused particular concern to the establishment - that a person who did not believe in witches must, therefore, not believe in a spiritual world and must, therefore, be both an atheist and, inevitably, a political rebel. This combination of religious scepticism and political disobedience became known by the derogatory term Hobbist, a term used by Shadwell in the play. Thomas Hobbes did not believe in witchcraft but saw it as a disruptive and punishable act. He wrote ‘as for Witches, I think not that their witchcraft is any real power; but yet that they are justly punished, for the false belief they have, that they can do such mischief, joined with their purpose to do it if they can’.[137]

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[130] Jane Wessel, 'Performing "A Ra-ree show": Political spectacle and the treason trial of Stephen College', *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660-1700,* 38 (2014), pp. 3-17, pp. 9-10.

[131] Stephen Colledge, *A ra-ree show to the tune of I am a senceless thing* (London, 1681), p. 2.

[132] Shadwell, *Witches*, 'To the reader'.

[133] Ian Bostridge, *Witchcraft and its transformations, c.1650-c.1750* (Oxford, 1997), p. 54.

[134] Diane Purkiss, *The witch in history : early modern and twentieth-century representations* (London, 1996), p. 183. The development of witchcraft scepticism, and its perceived link with atheism, is

Terms relating to witchcraft are in frequent use in the plays but, in most cases, this language is used as a general insult or an accusation for which the play provides no evidence. For example, in another of his plays, Shadwell uses it as a term of general abuse: ‘I am the Son of a Lancashire Witch, if thou art not an errant stinking Fellow’.[138] This prevalence of the language of witchcraft is not, however, reflected in the number of plays that include witches in the list of characters – but there are some. Accusations of witchcraft were often aimed at older women, and this is reflected in *The Fatal Jealousie* (1672) by Henry Neville Payne. The aunt of one of the principal characters is described as a witch. This ‘witch’ explains at length to her nephew that she has no supernatural powers but she can play upon the gullibility of people by organising convincing depictions of witchcraft – ‘The Vulgar People love to be deluded’.[139] Such a performance is arranged by the aunt to help her nephew’s ambition, but the cheat is

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considered by Peter Elmer in his chapter '”Saints or sorcerers”: Quakerism, demonology and the decline of witchcraft in seventeenth-century England’ in Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester and Gareth Roberts (ed), *Witchcraft in early modern Europe : studies in culture and belief* (Cambridge, 1996); Michael Hunter, 'The decline of magic: challenge and response in early Enlightenment England', *Historical Journal,* 55 (2012), pp. 399-425; and Knights, *The devil in disguise*.

[135] The work most closely focused on witchcraft in England in this period is by Bostridge, *Witchcraft*. The ideas, thinking and beliefs about witchcraft in early modern Europe are examined by Stuart Clark, *Thinking with demons : the idea of witchcraft in early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997). Ronald Hutton, *The witch : a history of fear, from ancient times to the present* (New Haven and London, 2017) sets a very wide geographical and chronological context for his consideration of the early modern European witch trials. The issue of diabolic disguise is also analysed by Nathan Johnstone, *The devil and demonism in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2006). Books that focus on the representations of witches on stage include Purkiss, *The witch in history*, and Anthony Harris, *Night's black agents : witchcraft and magic in seventeenth-century English drama* (Manchester, 1980).

[136] Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus triumphatus: or, Full and plain evidence concerning witches and apparitions* (London, 1681), title page.

[137] Thomas Hobbes and C. B. Macpherson, (ed) *Leviathan* (Harmondsworth, 1981), p. 92.

[138] Shadwell, *The humorists*, p. 65.

[139] Henry Neville Payne, *The fatal jealousie* (London, 1673) , pp. 22-23.

discovered with fatal consequences for the aunt. This use of artifice is also seen in Robert Stapylton's *The Step-Mother* (1663).[140] By contrast, we see 'real' magical powers in Nahum Tate's *Brutus of Alba* (1678) in the sorceress Ragusa. These powers are highlighted when she is visited by a spirit towards the end of the play who tell her that her powers will end that night.[141] One of the most famous witch plays of this period was William Davenant's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, first performed in 1664 and published in 1674. Davenant had been writing plays since 1627 and became the unofficial laureate in 1638. After the Civil War, he joined the exiled court in France and was later imprisoned by the republicans. After the Restoration, he was given one of the two licences to establish a theatre company by Charles II.[142] In his version of *Macbeth*, Davenant made some minor changes to Shakespeare's witches' scenes and added some new material, including a scene in which Macduff and Lady Macduff confront the witches. Its mood is sombre and full of foreboding, with prophecies of further murders by Macbeth, including that of Lady Macduff. Also in this scene, the witches celebrate the regicide of Duncan, and of 'good kings' in general. The developing use of stage machinery in this period is shown in some additional stage directions - in a short extension to the first Hecate scene, there is a stage direction 'Machine descends'.[143] This use of stage machinery and the convincing portrayals of the witches can be seen in Shadwell's play.

In *The Lancashire Witches*, witchcraft scepticism is represented by the characters of Sir Edward, Doughty, and Bellfort, and the highly divisive nature of the debate can be seen in the dispute between Sir Edward and Sir Jeffrey. The witches are interweaved throughout the play - there are many interactions between the witches and the other characters, and the witches live in Sir Edward's house where most of the action of the play takes place – 'wee'l revel in Sir Edward's Celler'. This creates the sense that the witches are omnipresent, an exception to Purkiss's observation that the stage witch is 'removed from the centre of the dramatic action; either she is isolated from community affairs or she is geographically located elsewhere.' Although Sir Edward inadvertently plays host to the witches, he does not believe in their existence. For him, they are 'Dreams, meer Dreams of Witches, old womens fables'. When the witches make their first entrance, Sir Edward sees 'a poor old Woman gathering of sticks', but the stage direction is clear - 'Mother Demdike rises out of the ground'.[144]

This portrayal of the witches as 'real' continues throughout the play and their actions affect the development of the plot and some of the characters. When Demdike is alone she summons other witches and they conjure up a storm by tearing a lamb to pieces and pouring the blood into a hole. The storm results in the arrival of Bellfort and Doubty at the house. In the storm the witches also pick up Clod (a country fellow) and put him on the top of a tree. In Sir Edward's cellar in Act Two, the witches worship the devil and 'salute his bum' and 'Their Brooms all march off and fetch Bottles.' In Act Three, one of the witches puts a bridle on Clod and then 'She gets upon him, and flies away.' Other magical moments include: 'The Bottle flies out of his hand'; 'Mother Demdike enters invisible to them and boxes the Priest'; and 'They hold up their bows, but cannot play.'[145]

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[140] Robert Stapylton, *The step-mother* (London, 1664), p. 20.

[141] Nahum Tate, *Brutus of Alba* (London, 1678), p. 48.

[142] Mary Edmond 'Sir William Davenant' in *ODNB Online*, 7197.

[143] William Davenant, *Macbeth* (London, 1674), pp. 25, 40.

[144] Shadwell, *Witches*, pp. 9-10; Purkiss, *The witch in history*, p. 251.

I do not share the argument made by critics that this realism of the witches undermines the character of Sir Edward and the political message that Shadwell intended. It is possible that there is a distinction to be drawn between the impact of the version of the play performed live in the theatre and the version available to the reader. The reader of the 1682 published edition would have been able to read the full uncensored text and would also be able to read Shadwell's introduction in which he sets out his personal beliefs about witchcraft. He writes that he is 'somewhat costive of belief' and refers to 'the ignorance, fear, melancholy, malice, confederacy, and imposture that contribute to the belief of Witchcraft'. The 'Drammatis Personæ' also provides evidence of Shadwell's scepticism. His sympathies lie with the views of the sceptic Sir Edward Harfort – 'A worthy Hospitable true English Gentleman, of good understanding, and honest Principles' - rather than those of the witch-hunting Sir Jeffery Shaklehead – 'A simple Justice, pretending to great Skill in Witches, and a great Persecuter of them.'[146] The audience in the theatre would have heard the censored version of the play, which may have dissipated its political message for some members of the audience. But Shadwell believed that this was a risk worth taking. He was a practical man of the theatre and knew what would excite his audiences. As he says in his introduction 'the people had wanted diversion'. As mentioned above, Shadwell was also fully aware that there was a real danger of the play being banned if he had portrayed the witches as a sham. By making the witches 'real', Shadwell avoided contention and even, as Ian Bostridge argues, created 'a unity of response in the playhouse, which the political divisions of the 1680s had denied to Shadwell's usual comic vehicle'.[147]

Shadwell may also have been hoping that some members of the audience would not take the realistic portrayal of the witches too literally. He was writing at a time when belief in witchcraft remained strong but there was also a significant strand of scepticism, and many theatre attenders would, as Munns argues, be 'familiar, at least in passing, with the skeptical and libertine literature of their era.'[148] Tate recognised the scepticism of the London theatre audience. In the prologue to his first play *Brutus of Alba* (1678) he wrote:

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[145] Shadwell, *Witches*, pp. 11-12, 25, 40, 52, 53, 63.
[146] Ibid., 'To the reader', 'Drammatis Personæ'.
[147] Bostridge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 91-92.

Witches and Spells the former Age believ'd,
And as Authentick on the Stage receiv'd:
Our Poet fears they'l hardly pass with you,
Who no Charms but in Beauty will allow![149]

While the portrayal of 'real' witches may have undermined to some extent the character of Sir Edward, the understanding of their audiences expressed by Shadwell and Tate indicates that it was worth risking some confusion both to avoid further censorship, and to provide the diverting entertainment that they believed the audience desired. It is interesting to note that, unlike other issues that will be discussed below, the witchcraft in this play was not censored. The scenes involving the witches were subjected to no cuts whatsoever and neither were any of the references to the witches by the other characters. Shadwell attributes this lack of censorship to his decision to portray the witches as 'real'.

Witchcraft, comedy, and sexuality

Witchcraft also plays a role in the comedy and the sexuality of the play. Although witches became increasingly comedic characters through the eighteenth century, they are not the main source of comedy in this play. After two scenes of serious discussion, comedy appears in the scene between Isabella and Sir Timothy, the man her father wants her to marry. Her disdainful and violent treatment of him runs through their three scenes together. His unsuitability to be Isabella's husband is matched by Young Harfort's lack of interest in marrying Theodosia, which provides another, and slightly different, source of comedy. The two priests are, apart from Smerk's first censored scene with Sir Edward, mostly comedic through their ridiculousness. The development of the play into farce in Acts Four and Five offers yet another style of comedy, including the appearance of Isabella and Theodosia disguised as witches, and the accidental sexual encounter between Tegue and the witch, Mother Dickenson. This use of witchcraft (real and pretended) for comic effect does not, however, make the witches simply comedic – their effect on the drama of the play is too serious for that. As Munns argues, 'The witches and their effects on those who believe in them must be presented as both comical and dangerous, absurd and real.'[150]

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[148] Munns, 'Change, skepticism, and uncertainty', p. 154.
[149] Tate, *Brutus of Alba*, 'Prologue'.

Much of the comedy in this play is created by its sexual energy. The main plot of the play is driven by the desire of Isabella and Theodosia. They may be working hard to avoid marriage to their parents' chosen husbands, but they are also sexually drawn to Bellfort and Doubty. This attraction to the men predates the play and started when they met 'last Summer at Scarbrough.' It is, however, the actions of the witches that bring the lovers together in the story. Sexual desire also drives characters such as Susan and Lady Shaklehead. Both the clerics in the play are consumed with lust, and Smerk's lust for Susan is directly provoked by the witches. Witchcraft also acts as a metaphor in the play for sexual attraction. Shadwell makes a link between the witches and the young women - the first mention of the witches is by Sir Timothy in his early scene with Isabella and he follows this by saying to Isabella 'but you are the pretty Witch that enchants my heart.' After Isabella has dispatched him with scorn, he wonders whether she has been bewitched by the witches. Bellfort is even comfortable calling Isabella a witch in a romantic context: 'A Thousand blessings light on thee my Dear Pretty Witch.'[151] As Munns has observed, the witches 'eroticize the household.'[152]

Anti-Catholicism and witchcraft

The portrayal of the Catholic priest Tegue meets all three of Gheeraert-Graffeuille and Vaughan's definitions of anti-Catholicism - at the end of the play Tegue is arrested (constitutional anti-Catholicism); he is clearly a papist (anti-popery); and he is Irish (ethnic prejudice).[153] His views and actions reflect the disreputable characteristics of some of the Catholic clerics examined in chapter 4, particularly Fryar Dominic in *The Spanish Fryar*.[154] He shares Dominic's disrespect for the sanctity of marriage, telling Smerk that he should commit fornication rather than get married, because fornication is a venial sin for which he will be absolved, whereas marriage is a mortal sin that will lead to damnation, as we saw in *A Wife Well Manag'd* (see section 4.3). Tegue's own lasciviousness becomes clear in Act Four when we see him lurking in the dark because 'de pretty Wenches, doe walke here in de dark at night' and he hopes to catch one and 'maak a Child upon her Body.' When he succeeds in making contact in the dark, there is a quick substitution and he goes off to bed with Mother Dickinson where, not realising she is a witch, he promises marriage and has ‘communication and Copulation’. He later demonstrates his dishonesty by using casuistic arguments, or what he calls ‘mental reservations’, to deny his fornication and to deny that he has taken holy orders.[155]

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[150] Munns, 'Golden Days', p. 204.
[151] Shadwell, *Witches*, pp. 6, 23, 65.
[152] Munns, 'Golden Days', p. 196.
[153] Gheeraert-Graffeuille and Vaughan (ed), *Anti-Catholicism in Britain and Ireland, 1600-2000 : practices, representations and ideas*, p. 3.
[154] Both roles were played by Anthony Leigh (see Figure 4-3). Van Lennep and Avery (ed), *London Stage*, p. ccxli.

The play also reflects the association of witchcraft with the rituals of Catholicism, which became intensified in the wake of the Popish Plot. Nathan Johnstone reports that there was an ‘enormous number of prints and ballads that were produced illustrating Catholic diabolism.’[156] One is attributed to Settle, who wrote, with a possible reference to his own pope-burning pageants: ‘His Holiness did Ride in State, / The People Laugh'd as they did go, / To see the Devil Kiss his Toe.’[157] Another anonymous 1680 pamphlet attacked the pope and his followers as showing ‘the spirit of envy, hatred, contention, cruelty, murther, extortion, witchcraft, necromancy, &c. assure your selves that there is the spirit of the Devil, and not of God’.[158] *The Lancashire Witches* offers us the most extensive representation in the plays examined of the entwining of Catholicism and witchcraft. In contrast to Fryar Dominic, Tegue has a rich and varied repertoire of Catholic rituals. Shadwell exaggerates the ridiculous nature of these to undermine Tegue, who he defines as ‘an equal mixture of Fool and Knave.’ When Tegue first appears, he offers to exorcise the witches from the house. Holy water is one of his favourites, and he has a number of relics, including ‘St. Caaterine de Virgins Wedding-Ring, here is one of St. Bridgets Nipples of her Tuggs, by my shoule, here is some of de sweat of St. Francis, and here is a piece of St. Laurence's Gridiron’. He wears some of his relics as a protection against witches. The ridiculing of these practices becomes extreme when the constable reports that his cow has been possessed. Tegue’s remedy is to ‘Put a pair of Breeches or Irish Trowsers upon your Cows head, Fellow, upon a Fryday Morning, and wid a great Stick maak beat upon her’.[159]

8.3 Censorship

The reasons for the censorship of this play have been much debated, both by Shadwell and by modern critics. Shadwell wrote that the opponents of the play ‘pretended that I had written a Satyr upon the Church of England’ because they were ‘ashamed to say it was for the sake of the Irish Priest’.[160] Hughes observes that the play ‘had to be performed with heavy cuts because of its anti-Catholic satire.'[161] Christopher Wheatley argues that the play was cut because Killigrew 'thought the play was an attack on the Church of England', particularly because of Smerk's willingness to accept Catholic teachings.[162] This view must have been reflected in contemporary criticism as Shadwell goes to the trouble of rejecting it – he denies that, by creating 'such a Fool and Knave as Smerk', he is portraying him as representative of all Church of England clerics. He argues that foolish Lords and knights are shown in plays, but this does not mean that all aristocrats are under attack.[163] Judith Slagle questions whether the play was censored because Shadwell linked 'Christian ritual too closely with pagan ritual' and because he 'appeared, in the process of attacking religion, to attack the court and the Tory notion of divine right?' Slagle argues, however, that the real trouble for Shadwell was caused by parallels between High Church plotting and witchcraft.[164] These various arguments can be assessed through a detailed analysis of the censorship of the play. This will focus both on the imposed cuts and on relevant passages that remained in the performed script because they were acceptable to Killigrew. While some opponents may have disliked Shadwell's portrayal of a devious and licentious Catholic priest, I believe that this was not the reason for Killigrew's censorship - Tegue is shown in an unseemly manner throughout the play, including many scenes that escaped censorship. The conforming minister Smerk is, however, central to the issue of the cuts as he appears in all three of the major excisions. I will argue that this analysis reveals an underlying theme – a concern that the play showed a contempt for the Church of England and its ministers.

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[155] Shadwell, *Witches*, pp. 59, 57, 58, 71. Note: the page numbering in this edition goes awry in Act Four.

[156] Johnstone, *The devil and demonism in early modern England*, p. 292.

[157] (attrib.) Elkanah Settle, *Londons drollery: or, The love and kindness between the pope and the devil* (London, 1678).

[158] R. R, *A renunciation of several popish doctrines because contrary to the doctrine of faith of the Church of England* (London, 1680), p. 277.

[159] Shadwell, *Witches*, pp. ‘Drammatis Personæ’, 38, 52, 63.

[160] Ibid., ‘To the reader’.

The largest cut imposed by Killigrew is the opening scene between Sir Edward and Smerk. The play opens with Smerk expressing his concern about Sir Edward's melancholy and offering to give his advice. Sir Edward immediately turns on Smerk and treats him in a very aggressive manner for the rest of the scene. He accuses Smerk of having poor manners and it is clear that Sir Edward sees Smerk as a social inferior who should not presume to advise his betters – 'Your Father is my Taylor, you are my Servant. / And do you think a Cassock and a Girdle / Can alter you so much.' He calls him insolent and says he is one of the 'senceless, Hotheaded Fools'. Smerk attempts to stand on his dignity as a minister, but Sir Edward will have none of it and dismisses Smerk. All Smerk's lines for the rest of the scene (with one exception discussed below) demonstrate submission and humility, while Sir Edward continues to attack him remorselessly.[165]

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[161] Hughes, *English drama*, p. 235.

[162] Christopher J. Wheatley, *Without God or reason : the plays of Thomas Shadwell and secular ethics in the Restoration* (Lewisburg ; London, 1993), pp. 94, 97.

[163] Shadwell, *Witches*, 'To the reader'.

[164] Judith Slagle, 'Thomas Shadwell's censored comedy, The Lancashire witches, an attack on religious ritual or divine right?', *Restoration and Eighteenth Century Research,* 7 (1992), pp. 54-63, pp. 57, 60.

The behaviour of both these characters in this scene is very different from the way they behave for the rest of the play, and the way Shadwell describes them in the 'Drammatis Personae'. Fisher sees Sir Edward as 'a new and sentimental character type, the wise and indulgent father-figure' and this is reflected in the 'Drammatis Personae'.[166] Although we may lose sympathy for Smerk as the play progresses, in this first scene what we see is a conforming minister being treated badly. The problem with this scene for Killigrew is unlikely, therefore, to have been the behaviour of Smerk. It is more likely that the cut was imposed because of Sir Edward's attitude to Smerk, the Church of England, and politics in general. Sir Edward has nonconformist sympathies, and he sees the presence of a conforming minister as an unavoidable intrusion, of value only to his servants and the local 'silly flock'. He rejects any role for Smerk in the life of his family and other people of 'sense and knowledge'. Smerk then accuses Sir Edward of atheism which prompts a fiery response. Sir Edward seeks to adopt the 'moderate' high ground by telling Smerk to 'Learn of the wise, the moderate and good', but his own language is aggressive and intolerant - 'Hotheaded Fools', 'ill-manner'd', 'you hot-spur Parsons'. He bewails 'What fatal mischiefs have domestick Priests / Brought on the best of Families in England!' and then explains these mischiefs at length, concluding with the accusation that some ministers like Smerk have infiltrated families to the point of getting control of their estates and marrying widows. Sir Edward accuses ministers like Smerk of intolerance of dissenters to whom they show a 'persecuting spirit', 'Foam at the mouth when a Dissenter's nam'd', and 'You dam em if they do not love a Surplice'. The surplice had become an important symbol of conformity in the restored Church of England, and strict conformists were on the look-out for ministers who were lax about wearing the surplice. Smerk's reaction places him at the zealous end of the conforming spectrum: 'Had I the power, I'de make them wear pitcht Surplices, / And light them till they flam'd about their Ears'. Smerk's outburst gives Sir Edward the opportunity to adopt the moderate high ground, including protestations of loyalty to the king who is 'renown'd for Grace and Mercy'. After a further grovelling apology from Smerk, Sir Edward imposes two conditions for Smerk remaining in his post. Smerk should 'Search not the secrets of my House or me' which, to Sir Edward, seems like Popish confession, and 'No controversial Sermons will I hear'. In these two conditions Sir Edward shows not only anti-popery but also a degree of anticlericalism. He makes it clear that he believes that there is no role for the clergy in politics: 'No medling with Government … A Plow-man is as fit to be a

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[165] Shadwell, *Witches*, p. 2.
[166] Fisher, 'The significance of Thomas Shadwell', p. 239.

Pilot, As a good Clergy-man to be a States-man, Sir'. Sir Edward is not, however, irreligious. As well as Smerk, there is clearly another minister in the house who we do not see - before we reach the end of the play, three marriages take place off stage. Further political comments are made by Sir Edward later in the play when he says he loves 'the Princes Rights and Peoples Liberties, and will defend 'em both with the last penny in my purse, and the last drop in my veins'.[167] Although he includes the rights of princes, his willingness to shed his blood in defence of 'Peoples Liberties' was too much for Killigrew. The removal of this line, as well as the opening scene with Smerk, leaves Sir Edward without anything political to say in the censored text of the play.

The second major cut is the scene between Smerk and Isabella at the beginning of Act Two. Once again, Smerk finds himself in conflict with a member of the Harfort family, but this time it is because he has professed his love for Isabella. As with Sir Timothy, Isabella assaults Smerk physically and verbally. She is particularly fierce when Smerk once again attempts to elevate his social position: 'Your Father has not reverence enough For the Church and Churchmen … My function yet, I say, deserves more reverence … It equals me with the best of Gentry.'[168] Isabella condemns this last comment as popery on the grounds that such social honour can only be given by the king and not by the Church. This scene shows a conforming cleric expressing his love for a young woman, but this clerical passion was not the cause of the cut because an even more passionate scene with Susan that takes place later in the play escaped censorship. The reason is more likely to be linked to Isabella's treatment of a conforming cleric.

The third major cut is the scene in Act Three when Smerk positions himself close to the Church of Rome in a discussion with Tegue: 'No, for my part though I differ in some things, yet I honour the Church of Rome as a true Church … I think the Papists are honest, loyal men, and the Jesuits dyed innocent'. He also appears to be a violent enemy of the Presbyterians: 'I would have Surplices cram'd down their Throats, or would have 'em hang'd in Cannonical Girdles.' There then follows a dispute between Bellfort, Doubty, and Smerk on the nature of the Popish Plot. Smerk says that 'none but Phanaticks, Hobbists, and Atheists, believe the Plot' and Bellfort says that: 'Why the true and wise Church of England-men believes it, and are a great Rock against the Church of Rome.' Doubty then attacks Smerk and others like him as 'such Fellows as you are scandals to the Church, a Company of Tantivy Fools' and calls him 'a Rascal conceal'd in the Church'. There is a scene in Act Four that was not cut that includes a continuation of the discussion between Smerk and Tegue about the Catholic Church. Although

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[167] Shadwell, *Witches*, pp. 2-4, 30.

[168] Ibid., p. 16-17.

Smerk once again praises the Catholic Church – 'Tis a fine Church, a Church of Splender, and riches, and power' - he does say that he does not accept purgatory. However, he weakens on this point under persuasion by Tegue, but he does confirm that he could never believe in transubstantiation. He is then distracted by his love for Susan, and we hear no more of this debate.[169] The appearance of the young women dressed as witches at the end of this scene interrupted their discussion about transubstantiation, leaving the implication that Smerk may well have also accepted this doctrine if the discussion had continued. Killigrew's allowance of this scene shows that Smerk's acceptance of some Catholic doctrines would not have been the reason for the removal of the earlier scene between Smerk and Tegue.

This analysis shows a number of possible reasons for the cuts that were imposed by Killigrew. The excision of the first scene, and the other smaller cut, indicates that the political emasculation of the character of Sir Edward was an important aim. The third major cut removes the portrayal of a conforming cleric associating himself with the Catholic Church. In the eyes of many nonconformists, the Church of England was a slightly diluted form of popery, and this attitude is reflected in the character and behaviour of Smerk. It is unlikely, however, that this was the primary reason for the censorship as the second scene between Smerk and Tegue was left uncut despite Smerk's acceptance the Catholic doctrine of purgatory.

The cut that requires a different explanation is the scene between Smerk and Isabella. There is no political discussion in this scene and, as mentioned above, Smerk's sexual behaviour in his later uncut scene with Susan is more fervent than in this one. There is, however, one element of this scene that can also be found in the other two major excised scenes. This is the abusive way that Smerk is treated, especially when he attempts to establish his social position. In the three scenes, Isabella, Sir Edward, and Doubty all insult Smerk for what they see as his unacceptable behaviour. I believe it was Shadwell's apparent contempt for the Church of England and its ministers that led to the censorship, which is unsurprising at a time when the balance of power in the country was shifting towards the Tory faction and the Church of England.

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The turbulent birth of the play reflects the unsettled world of its time. Throughout the play we see glimpses of the tensions in the real world outside - between Whigs and Tories, witchcraft believers and sceptics, conformists and dissenters, Protestants and Catholics, Christians and atheists, independently minded women and patriarchs, the king and parliament, and censors and playwrights. Although the derogatory portrayals of the two clerics, Catholic and Protestant, display the underlying anticlericalism of the time, the evidence of the censorship of the play shows that a disrespectful attitude to a conforming clergyman was unacceptable to the regime. When Shadwell came to publish the play, however, not only did he reinstate the censored sections, but he added an introduction that made his religious and political positions clear in what Munns describes as ‘a blaze of defiant Whiggism.’[170] As a result, he paid a price. He would be satirised by Durfey in his play *Sir Barnaby Whigg*, also first performed in 1681, and would continue to be under attack in his long running dispute with Dryden. And it would be seven years before London would see another new play by Thomas Shadwell.

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[169] Ibid., pp. 35-36, 59.

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[170] Munns, 'Golden Days', p. 195.

9 CONCLUSION

The central argument of this thesis - that the dramatists' attitude to religion was, at the very least, either intentionally or carelessly disrespectful - is based on the premise that the constant ridiculing of the clerics and other religious characters in the plays I have examined was not just a polemical campaign against the religious opponents of the Church of England, and neither was it just harmless scoffing and drolling. This conclusion will consider the extent to which the remorseless attacks in the plays on adherents to all religions and denominations had the effect of undermining religion itself. This question will be addressed through the lens of the dramatists in section 9.2, after which we will look beyond the plays and focus on the audiences and wider society in section 9.3. Before that, we will return to the main themes of the thesis to consider the evidence of the plays against the charges levelled by Collier, Horneck, and others.

9.1 Themes

Horneck pointed out the risk that putting a ridiculous religious character on stage had the effect of harming the real thing - 'since acts of hypocrisie look so very like acts of true Religion, the danger is, that while you raille the counterfeit, you hurt the Original, and while you dress the Image in a fools Coat, the substance suffers in the ridiculous representation'.[1] Counterfeit was often used in the plays through the use of disguise, including Fainwell's disguise as a visiting Quaker in *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, Arabella and Jenny using religious disguise for their own ends in *The Fair Quaker of Deal,* the dissembling Jesuits and Polidorus's 'borrow'd Shape' in *The Excommunicated Prince*, and the supreme disguise of Pope Joanna in *The Female Prelate*. The versions of Tartuffe – Father Finicall in *The English Frier* and Doctor Wolf in *The Non-Juror* – showed us deceitful manipulation under the cover of piety. The Puritans in *The Roundheads* proclaimed hypocrisy and dissimulation to be essential to their cause, but they were no match for the conformist Lady Desborough, who knew she could outwit them with a more sophisticated version of counterfeit and hypocrisy. By contrast, we saw Tickletext in *The Feigned Curtizans* cast off his fool's coat to go wenching.

The fool's coat of hypocrisy was seen around the shoulders of many characters, including Colonel Jolly with his mouldy prayer book in *The Cutter of Coleman Street* and the financially ambitious Puritan Scrapeall in *The Squire of Alsatia*. In *Sir Patient Fancy*, Lady Fancy accuses her husband's friends of hypocrisy while confessing that she wears 'the best cloak I can put on to cheat him with.'[2] Fools' cloaks with a difference were seen in *The Atheist*, with its proud atheist turning out to be a believer and its conformist being revealed to have no faith.

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[1] Horneck, *The sirenes*, pp. 192-3.
[2] Behn, *Sir Patient Fancy*, p. 14.

We have also seen some religious conversions that may or may not have been counterfeits. Sir Feeble Goodwill in *The Quakers Wedding* became a Quaker to win his rich widow, and Sir Barnaby Whigg was willing to adopt any religious pretence to achieve his ambitions. Conversion is an important theme in *Don Sebastian*, written in the wake of the Glorious Revolution, an event that was partly motivated by the fear of a conversion of the entire nation to Catholicism.

Horneck saw the plays and the world around him as frivolous, and with a premium on carnivalesque behaviour – 'The Plays we speak of, are suited to the loose humour of the age, which seems to hate all things that are serious … & delights in nothing so much, as in jests and fooleries'.[3] Many of the plays fit neatly within Horneck's definition and it is interesting to note that the majority of the plays considered in this thesis are comedies. This use of comedy to portray religious characters supports the central argument that there is significant disrespect for religion at work in these plays. The plays by, and about, the wits and libertines exhibited their enthusiasm for foolery and their reluctance to take the world seriously. This was most obvious in chapter 7 on atheism, and in the plays of John Vanbrugh in particular, but it can also be seen at other points. In *The Man of Mode,* the Court Wit Etherege used religious metaphors for sexual activity, and one of the characters in Congreve's *The Old Batchelor* observes the glorification of atheism. Horneck bewails these developments - 'Whence hath come that Atheism, that looseness, that indifferency in things Divine, that low esteem of the tremendous mysteries of Christianity, which of late like a Land-flood hath over run us?'[4]

Both Horneck and Collier saw the theatre as a place of immorality, and there are many characters in the plays that support their argument. The lasciviousness of some religious characters is represented by their obsession with breasts, including Ananias Gogle in *The Roundheads*, Obadiah Prim in *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*, and Sir Patient Fancy's friends. Sir Jerry Witwould in *The Stage Beaux Toss'd in a Blanket* and Father Bernardo in *A Wife Well Manag'd* are both caught out as lascivious hypocrites. Gluttony and drunkenness are frequent traits of religious characters, including Soaker in *The Cutter of Coleman Street*, Noddy in *A Devil for a Wife*, Dominic in *The Spanish Fryar*, the Alsatian divine in *The Squire of Alsatia*, the Quaker in *A City Ramble*, and the High-Church Lady in *The Humour of Elections*. All these faults and more are accumulated in Chaplain Bull in *The Relapse.* The presence of so many clerics in this paragraph leads us to the theme of anticlericalism.

Horneck bewails the way in which 'the most venerable things turned into ridicule' in the plays. So many of the religious characters we have seen have been ridiculed, and this is most evident with the clerics. The extent of this ridicule, together with the absence of much genuine piety, casts a negative light not only on the characters, but on religion itself. Collier wrote an entire chapter of *A Short View* on the abuse of clergy in the plays, and Horneck wrote that, in the plays, 'Religion is too often traduced'.[5] From the casuistry of Scruple in *The Cheats,* to the manipulations of the characters modelled on Tartuffe, to the political manipulations of Pope Joanna in *The Female Prelate* and Politico in *The Folly of Priestcraft*, to the immorality of so many of the clerics in the plays, we have seen anticlericalism in full flight.

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[3] Horneck, *The sirenes*, p. 191.
[4] Ibid., p. 220.

One important aspect of anticlericalism is the attitude of the clerical characters to the religious institution of marriage, which comes under attack in the plays. These attacks are withering; the metaphors are hostile and sometimes lurid; the moral conventions around marriage are questioned; and the clerical characters are systematically abused. There are clerics who carry out normal and reasonable marriages, but most of these do not take an active part in the action on stage. Most of the clerics we see on stage are portrayed as hypocrites, and the indiscriminate nature of these attacks on clerics of all denominations supports the argument that there is a general anticlericalism at work. Most clerics are feebly acquiescent at best and often undermine marriage through words and deeds of commission or omission, and through their hypocrisy and general behaviour. It would be an exaggeration to say that these men played the leading role in undermining the institution of marriage in the plays, but they do not put up much of a fight. Although the primary aim of the playwrights may not have been to attack the institution, they seem unconcerned about creating potential damage to it.

Although the majority of religious characters are negatively portrayed, there are some who receive more sympathetic treatment from the dramatists, which brings us to the theme of toleration. Horneck, like many conformists at the time, believed that the Church of England was in danger from dissenters - 'the sides of Men that differ from our Church'. He saw the theatre as a poisonous place where 'the very foundation of Christianity is shaken and undermined'.[6] Toleration was a contested issue in 1690 when Horneck's book was published, and we have seen how the plays reflected this. *The Late Revolution*, written in the same year as Horneck's book, showed us a picture of religious co-existence, even though it may have been somewhat reluctant. In the same year, *Distress'd Innocence* showed a conflict between a tolerant monarch and an intolerant religious leader, which culminated in a victory for toleration. The more tolerant atmosphere of the early eighteenth century is reflected in the sympathetic Quaker characters, such as Tremilla, Scruple, and Widow Purelight. In *The Fair*

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[5] Ibid., p. 192.

[6] Ibid., p. 192.

Quaker of Deal, the sympathetic Quaker, Dorcas Zeal, is clearly contrasted with her own sister Arabella - the unsympathetically portrayed conformist.

Not all Quaker characters in this period received such favourable treatment. The drunk in *The City Ramble* and the lascivious Obadiah Prim continued the intolerant attitude to nonconformists in the plays that began immediately after the Restoration. Nonconformists were shown as easily fooled in *The Cutter of Coleman Street* and *Mr Turbulent*, as intolerant themselves in *A Devil of a Wife*, and in need of conversion to conformity at the end of the play in *Sir Patient Fancy* and *The Fair Quaker of Deal*. Intolerance of Catholicism in the plays was, of course, remorseless. With the exception of Mr Britain in *The Folly of Priestcraft* and the reluctant King Charles in *The Massacre of Paris*, all the Catholics seen in the plays I have selected are shown as unsympathetic and often much worse. This also applies to the Non-Jurors in *The Stage Beaux* and *The Non-Juror*.

Doctor Wolf in *The Non-Juror* turns out to be a Catholic priest in disguise and this follows a long line of characters who reflected the various tropes that linked religious groups together, both in the plays and also in pamphlet literature. The trope that nonconformists and Catholics are all the same is dramatized in *The Royalist* when Jonas pretends to be a Jesuit who has infiltrated a group of dissenters. Catholics are also seen as atheists, as we saw in Polidorus, Pope Joanna, and Father Finicall. A similar trope is used towards Islam in *Don Sebastian* when we see the Mufti confessing to the audience that Mahomet means nothing to him except as a route to power. In *The Inquisition*, we saw the High Church linked with Catholicism. Finally, *The Lancashire Witches* presented the trope of the perceived link between Catholicism and witchcraft.

The issue of denominational ambiguity has been raised at times throughout the thesis. This ambiguity serves to emphasise the idea that it was religion itself that was being attacked, rather than individual denominations. This has been particularly pertinent in those plays that contain attacks on clerics or adherents of more than one denomination. This was most conspicuous where we saw pairs of clerics, such as Hothead and Testimony in *Sir Courtly Nice* and Smerk and Tegue in *The Lancashire Witches*, but we also saw both conformists and dissenters under attack in plays such as *The Cutter of Coleman Street, Sir Patient Fancy,* and *The Roundheads.* These examples heighten the sense that the plays could unsettle religion more generally.

9.2 The dramatists

The majority of the new plays of the period did not engage in a material way with religion, but there were a significant number that did. Religion was an inescapable element of life at this time and the plays I have examined show that the dramatists recognised its importance. Believing in the importance of religion and finding it a suitable subject for drama does not, however, require deep faith, or even a positive attitude. The evidence from the plays reveals an attitude to religion that could be generously described as disrespectful and, in many cases, is clearly irreligious.

Horneck wrote that plays should be 'restrain'd altogether to vertue and goodness'.[7] One important question is whether the dramatists were attempting to advocate for an improvement in morals and a respect for religion through the ridiculing of immoral, irreligious behaviour. This takes us back to the dispute between Collier, Vanbrugh, and others about the purposes of the theatre. In his response to Collier, Vanbrugh argued that he offered the audience examples of irreligious behaviour that 'is design'd for their contempt, and not for their imitation'.[8] Crowne also took a defensive position in his Prologue to *Caligula*, (see section 6.1) when he apologised for showing a favourable image of atheism and wrote 'I am sorry there should be anything under my hand, in defence of such a false, pernicious, and detestable an opinion'.[9] As Anthony observed, these protestations are unconvincing.[10] They came in the wake of Collier's vitriolic attack on the stage and may have been simply an attempt to cover their tracks at a very challenging time. This issue can be addressed by considering two questions – were the portrayals of immorality and irreligion counterbalanced by characters of virtue and piety, and did the immoral characters come to a bad end?

The previous section reviewed some examples of virtuous religious characters, and in chapter 4 we saw Protestant heroes in some of the anti-Catholic plays. But these are rare examples and most immoral and irreligious characters are left to indulge their vices in a world without any contrasting qualities. Also, although Horneck accepted that the most effective way to show virtue and goodness is to contrast it with vice, he was concerned that showing vice on stage 'tho' but for a few minutes' would be corrupting 'whatever Fate it ends in'. In his view, vice on stage 'breaths a poisonous vapour, both on the Actor and the Spectator'.[11] So, even if there were more examples of virtuous characters, in Horneck's view the damage is quickly done by a brief exposure to the corruption.

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[7] Ibid., p. 189.

[8] Vanbrugh, *A short vindication*, p. 17.

[9] Crowne, *Caligula*, 'The epistle to the reader'.

[10] Anthony, *Collier*, p. 100.

[11] Horneck, *The sirenes*, pp. 189-190.

Some plays show the characters of vice coming to a bad end, and it could be argued that such punishment justifies the portrayal of the faults. But this only applies to just over half of the characters considered here. A significant minority of the plays show such characters concluding the play successfully or, at least, unchanged - Tabitha Barebottle, Priscilla Turbulent, Beaugard, and Chaplain Bull are happily married; Smerk is also happily married, even though he lost his position; the Duke of Guise and the supporters of Mary Tudor remained in power after destroying their opponents; and the casuistical Scruple got a higher salary.

There has been debate, by contemporaries and modern scholars, about whether the disrespect for religion shown by the dramatists means that they could be placed within the atheism spectrum. I am not inclined to accept Hume's assertion that it would be 'the height of folly' to imagine that audiences and playwrights were 'happy heathens'.[12] Most of them were probably not 'heathens' but, for example, Hume himself suggested that Otway, in contrast to Daredevil in *The Atheist*, was 'an unhappy disbeliever who longs to believe.'[13] This could be one reason why Otway chose not to engage with Daredevil's conflicted religious position at the end of the play. It may be that Otway and other playwrights were disbelievers who, like Beaugard, hid their lack of belief from the eyes of society. Also, the two Court Wits whose plays have been examined may, or may not, have been non-believers, but their behaviour placed them, along with Rochester, within the definition of practical atheists. Even if the dramatists held religious beliefs and did not write with the intention of undermining religion, they could have made an effort to include more examples of sympathetic religious characters to counterbalance the many negative portrayals. As they did not do this, it is not difficult to imagine that they did not care about the effect their works were having on religion in general.

9.3 Beyond the plays

Although disrespect for religion was not confined to the theatre, some critics saw the theatre as the primary culprit, and believed that it had agency in encouraging irreligion. In 1698 Samuel Wesley blamed the 'Infamous Theatres, which seem to have done more Mischief, than Hobbes himself or our new Atheistical Clubs, to the Faith and Morals of the Nation.'[14] As discussed in section 2.2, the theatres provided spaces where audiences could share a carnivalesque atmosphere where religion and authority were challenged in a way that so alarmed the antitheatricals, who saw the plays as not only attacking religion but also questioning established authority. We also saw in section 2.2 how Horneck believed that plays 'strike vanity into the mind, affect the sensual part, drive away seriousness, and leave an unhappy tincture behind them.'[15] It is highly unlikely that everyone who attended a performance would become irreligious. It is possible that some members of the audience could leave their faith at the door when they arrived, enjoy sharing the potent effect of the carnivalesque atmosphere, and pick up their faith again when they left. But it is unlikely that this would apply to many. There would be those whose religious commitment was entirely unaffected by what they experienced, as well as irreligious folk who enjoyed every moment of the scoffing and drolling. In between these extremes, however, it is possible to imagine some people leaving the theatre with Horneck's unhappy tincture in their minds.

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[12] Hume, *Rakish stage*, p. 54.

[13] Robert D. Hume, 'Otway and the comic muse', *Studies in Philology,* 73 (1976), pp. 87-116, p. 110.

[14] Samuel Wesley, *A sermon concerning reformation of manners* (London, 1698), p. 20.

The extent to which a disrespectful attitude to religion can be found in the audiences and in wider society is a question that is outside the scope of this thesis and will require further research. There are, however, clues in the plays that this attitude was shared by some members of the audience – a section of society that included members of the Court, and even some of the monarchs. At the beginning of *The Reform'd Wife* (1700) by William Burnaby, Sir Solomon is trying to persuade his wife Astrea to go the playhouse with him. Her response is very negative - 'Is it possible, Sir Solomon, you shou'd have so little Religion, as to fancy the Entertainment of that place cou'd give a Civil Woman any Pleasure?'. Her friend Clarinda adds that the wickedness of the stage is reflected in the audience, 'turn but your Eyes off the Stage, and you shall see that your agreeable Woman is a Coquet, and your agreeable Man an Atheist, and the first step to be very witty, is (it seems) to be very wicked.'[16] This idea that a theatre audience contained atheists and wicked wits caused concern as soon as the theatres reopened after the Restoration, especially as there was a perception that such attitudes were shared by members of the royal Court.

As we saw in section 2.2, there was a sense that the theatres were places of carnivalesque disorder and, in the audiences, people of faith sometimes seem to be a rarity. Behn wrote about her audience, only half mockingly, – 'I dare swear, not one of you in Seven, / E're had the impudence to hope for Heaven.'[17] John Hughes wrote in the Epilogue to one of his plays that the audience had seen the hero give up everything for love – except his faith. He then added 'Methinks now I can spy, / Among you airy Sparks, some who wou'd cry, / Phoo, Pox—for that—what need of such a Pother?'[18] Griffin gave one of his characters this damning line – 'Ay, let me alone for a religious Hypocrite; I have been in England, where Hypocrisy in

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[15] Horneck, *The sirenes*, p. 200.
[16] William Burnaby, *The reform'd wife* (London, 1700), p. 2.
[17] Aphra Behn, *The young king* (London, 1683), 'Prologue'.
[18] John Hughes, *The siege of Damascus* (London, 1720), 'Epilogue'.

Religion is a very thriving Trade, and what a numerous Party live by; a Man can't be there without learning some of it.'[19] This observation was not confined to the dramatists. In 1661 the Duke of Ormonde wrote that

> the king spent most of his time with confident young men, who abhorred all discourse that was serious, and, in the liberty they assumed in drollery and raillery, preserved no reverence towards God or man, but laughed at all sober men, and even at religion itself.[20]

These quotations reveal a tension. This was a society in which religion was ubiquitous and highly contested, where rafts of legislation backed up by persecution attempted to impose religious uniformity on the entire adult population, and where a monarch was ejected partly because of his faith. But, within this society, a disrespect for religion in the theatre was being tolerated at the highest levels of that society. This tension is reflected in Crowne's prologue to one of his plays:

> All parties in a Play-House may agree,
> The Stage is priviledg'd from Piety.
> 'Tis pleasant, Sirs, to see you fight and brawl
> About Religion, but have none at all.[21]

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[19] Benjamin Griffin, *The humours of purgatory* (London, 1716), p. 4.

[20] Quoted in Jeremy Webster, *Performing libertinism in Charles II's court: Politics, drama, sexuality* (Gordonsville, 2005), p. 11.

[21] John Crowne, *The misery of civil-war* (London, 1680), 'Prologue'.

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