

PROFESSIONAL DRAMA IN THE TWILIGHT OF THE ELIZABETHAN CLOWN:

PLAYING AND PROFESSIONAL PLAYWRIGHTING

IN THE LATE 1580s AND EARLY 1590s

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the theatrical vocation of the Elizabethan clown and its impact upon the development of playwrighting as a profession in the late 1580s and early 1590s. It particularly considers the ways in which competing conceptions of the clown and clowning contributed to the professional playwright's understanding of his practice, of his profession, and ultimately of artistic creation in general. Chapter One, "Robert Greene, Professional Authorship and the Clown," examines Robert Greene's equivocal use of clowns in his plays written for the Queen's Men. Chapter Two, "Marlowe's 'jygging vaines and riming mother wits': Marlovian Clowns and Dramatic Authorship," argues that *Doctor Faustus*, *The Jew of Malta*, and *Hero and Leander* together reveal Marlowe's unexpectedly broad understanding both of clowning and of the relationship between actor and playwright. Chapter Three, "Jones's Pen and Marlowe's Socks: Richard Jones, Print Culture and the Beginnings of English Literature," continues this focus on Marlowe, contending through a study of *Tamburlaine*'s first publisher Richard Jones that Marlowe likely was responsible for scenes of clowning in his *Tamburlaine* plays. This chapter

also stresses that the initial printing of *Tamburlaine*--an event crucial to the valorization of printed professional drama and consequently to the developing autonomy of the professional playwright--was not undertaken by a professional dramatist but by a marginal member of the Stationers' Company. The final chapter, "The Limits of Clowning in the Age of Marprelate: The Anti-Martinist Tracts and *2 Henry VI*," maps the modifications of the clown identity in the 1589 and 1590 anti-Martinist tracts. It concludes by tracing the influence of the Marprelate conflicts upon Shakespeare's Cade scenes in *2 Henry VI*, a sequence that intermingles questions of politics, theology, rhetoric and theatrical performance. Ultimately, through its broad focus on the work of pamphleteers, publishers and playwrights, this dissertation suggests that the decline of clowning in the 1590s was due, ironically, not simply to changing social conditions or to negative reactions by certain playwrights but also to a new and widespread engagement with the values and practices of the professional clown.