

**“WORDS WITH WORDS REVENGED”: RELIGIOUS CONFLICT AND THE  
REARTICULATION OF LATE ELIZABETHAN SATIRE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation examines the intersections of religious satire, libel, and polemic with the works of Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne, and Nashe. It concentrates on new discursive strategies that emerged from the conflict between reformers and Church authorities and proceeded to inform literary production and professional rivalries in the 1590's. Mikhail Bakhtin's accounts of utterance as a dialogue of heteroglot contentions among various languages, of Menippean satire, and of speech genres provide the framework for tracking the infiltration of modes of religious abuse into early modern articulations of literary language, plotting, and structure. The introduction traces the history of scholarly responses to Elizabethan satire, arguing for a greater appreciation of satire and satiric discourse across generic boundaries and within canonical works. Chapter One offers a reading of the explosive writings of the Martin Marprelate controversy that contrasts with recent "carnavalesque" interpretations of the notorious Marprelate pamphlets by stressing their adaptation of Menippean satiric tradition to ridicule a corrupt and ineffectual episcopacy. Chapter Two charts the post-Marprelate

upsurge of serio-comic rhetoric in Nashe's *Have With You to Saffron Walden* and Church polemicist Matthew Sutcliffe's *Answere Unto A Certaine Calumnious Letter*. Nashe and Sutcliffe recast Marprelate's uproarious Menippean satire to abuse their ideological adversaries, personalizing scandalous forms of insult and invective. Chapter Three reads Donne's *Satire IV* as dramatizing the era's admiration for and apprehension about personal defamation by depicting a reform-minded satirist's attempts to rebuke a provocative, rhetorically proficient court habitué. Paradoxically, the roles of moral censurer and satiric target reverse themselves in Donne's innovative satiric form. Chapter Four explores Achilles' pageants in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* as threats to epic hierarchies of language, status, and military rank. Ulysses' counter-libelling of Achilles reveals that slander can function both as political subversion and as official propaganda. Chapter Five analyzes the dialogical relations between King James' political writings and Jonson's *Sejanus*. *Sejanus* dramatizes satire as a weapon of the tyrannical state, alluding to James' efforts in *Basilikon Doron* and *The Counterblaste to Tobacco* to rule not only as King but as England's chief satirist.