



Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama (Studies in Performance and Early Modern Drama)

Natasha Korda

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Working Subjects in Early Modern English Drama investigates the ways in which work became a subject of inquiry on the early modern stage and the processes by which the drama began to forge new connections between labor and subjectivity in the period. The essays assembled here address fascinating and hitherto unexplored questions raised by the subject of labor as it was taken up in the drama of the period: How were laboring bodies and the goods they produced, marketed and consumed represented onstage through speech, action, gesture, costumes and properties? How did plays participate in shaping the identities that situated laboring subjects within the social hierarchy? In what ways did the drama engage with contemporary discourses (social, political, economic, religious, etc.) that defined the cultural meanings of work? How did players and playwrights define their own status with respect to the shifting boundaries between high status/low status, legitimate/illegitimate, profitable/unprofitable, skilled/unskilled, formal/informal, male/female, free/bound, paid/unpaid forms of work? Merchants, usurers, clothworkers, cooks, confectioners, shopkeepers, shoemakers, sheepshearers, shipbuilders, sailors, perfumers, players, magicians, servants and slaves are among the many workers examined in this collection. Offering compelling new readings of both canonical and lesser-known plays in a broad range of genres (including history plays, comedies, tragedies, tragi-comedies, travel plays and civic pageants), this collection considers how early modern drama actively participated in a burgeoning, proto-capitalist economy by staging England's newly diverse workforce and exploring the subject of work itself.

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