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Elements in the Renaissance

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WHO OWNS LITERATURE?

Early Modernity's Orphaned Texts

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-53919-7 — Who Owns Literature?
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Frontmatter
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Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009539197

DOI: 10.1017/9781009357876

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009357876

First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-009-53919-7 Hardback
ISBN 978-1-009-35786-9 Paperback
ISSN 2631-9101 (online)
ISSN 2631-9098 (print)

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Who Owns Literature?

Early Modernity's Orphaned Texts

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DOI: 10.1017/9781009357876
First published online: December 2024

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Abstract: Interest in material culture has produced a rigorous body of scholarship that considers the dynamics of licensing, permissions, and patronage – an ongoing history of the estrangement of works from their authors. Additionally, translation studies is enabling new ways to think about the emergence of European vernaculars and the reappropriation of classical and early Christian texts. This Element emerges from these intersecting stories. How did early modern authors say goodbye to their works; how do translators and editors articulate their duty to the dead or those incapable of caring for their work; what happens once censorship is invoked in the name of other forms of protection? The notion of the work as orphan, sent out and unable to return to its author, will take us from Horace to Dante, Montaigne, Anne Bradstreet, and others as we reflect on the relevance of the vocabularies of loss, charity, and licence for literature.

Keywords: translation, editing, early modernity, book history, ownership

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ISBNs: 9781009539197 (HB), 9781009357869 (PB), 9781009357876 (OC)
ISSNs: 2631-9101 (online), 2631-9098 (print)

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