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978-1-107-04030-4 - The Rise of Prison Literature in the Sixteenth Century

Ruth Ahnert

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## THE RISE OF PRISON LITERATURE IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

Examining works by some of the most famous prisoners from the early modern period, including Thomas More, Lady Jane Grey, and Thomas Wyatt, Ruth Ahnert presents the first major study of prison literature dating from this era. She argues that the English Reformation established the prison as an influential literary sphere. In the previous centuries we find only isolated examples of prison writings, but the religious and political instability of the Tudor reigns provided the conditions for the practice to thrive. This book shows the wide variety of genres that prisoners wrote, and it explores the subtle tricks they employed in order to appropriate the site of the prison for their own agendas. Ahnert charts the spreading influence of such works beyond the prison cell, tracing the textual communities they constructed, and the ways in which writings were smuggled out of prison, and then disseminated through script and print.

RUTH AHNERT is a lecturer in Early Modern Studies in the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary, University of London. Her work focuses on the literature and culture of the Tudor period, with a specific emphasis on religious history, prison literature, and letter writing. Recent and forthcoming publications examine prison scenes in early modern drama, trial narratives, and Protestant letter networks. Dr Ahnert serves on the Council of the Society for Renaissance Studies, and is co-editor of the society's *Bulletin*.

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## *Acknowledgments*

This book began as an undergraduate essay set by Colin Burrow during the final year of my English degree at the University of Cambridge. I quickly realised that the topic of sixteenth-century prison writers could not be addressed adequately in a weekly essay, and decided to make it the focus of my doctoral research. I was fortunate enough to be supervised for my PhD by Daniel Wakelin, who was not only an astute and rigorous reader but also a kind and sage mentor. He has had a profound effect on the way I approach texts, and the book is what it is because of him. The development of the thesis into the book was also crucially shaped by the advice of my examiners, Brian Cummings and Jason Scott-Warren, and it has benefited from numerous other careful readers, including Linda Bates, Aisling Byrne, Helen Cooper, Joanna Craigwood, Sarah Howe, Joe Moshenska, Bill Sherman, Paul Strohm, Diane Vincent, James Wade, Edward Wilson-Lee, and the two anonymous readers from Cambridge University Press. Mary Flannery read more than her fair share of the manuscript, as well as providing other crucial support throughout the duration of this project through friendship and food. Any remaining faults are, of course, my own.

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## *Abbreviations and references*

When quoting from early printed books, I provide semi-diplomatic transcriptions: superscript letters are lowered; contractions are expanded and supplied letters italicised; thorn and *y* are replaced with *th* and terminal *-es* graph with *-es*. These have been silently expanded. Deletions in the text are signalled with <xxx>, lost letters and words with { . . . }, interlineations with /xxx\ and editorial insertions with [xxx]. Titles from early modern printed books have frequently been truncated for brevity. The following abbreviations are used for books, journals or libraries that are cited frequently:

BL	British Library, London
CW	<i>The Complete Works of St Thomas More</i> , 15 vols. (New Haven, 1963–97)
ECL	Emmanuel College Library, Cambridge
EETS OS	Early English Text Society, Original Series
HLQ	<i>Huntington Library Quarterly</i>
LM	<i>Certain most godly, fruitful, and comfortable letters of such true saintes and holy martyrs of God</i> (otherwise known as ‘Letters of the Martyrs’), ed. Henry Bull (London, 1564)
LP	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII: Preserved in the Public Record Office, the British Museum and elsewhere (in England)</i> , ed. J. S. Brewer et al., 21 vols. (London, 1862–1910)
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
Rerum	<i>Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum</i> (Basle, 1559)

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*List of abbreviations and references*

- STC* *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland and of English Books Printed Abroad, 1475–1640*, compiled by A. W. Pollard, and G. R. Redgrave, 2nd edn, revised and enlarged by W. A. Jackson, F. S. Ferguson and K. F. Pantzer, 3 vols. (London, 1976–91)
- TAMO* (1563) *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* or *TAMO* (1563 edition) (Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011). [www.johnfoxe.org](http://www.johnfoxe.org) [accessed 18 December 2012]
- TAMO* (1570) *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* or *TAMO* (1570 edition) (Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011). [www.johnfoxe.org](http://www.johnfoxe.org) [accessed 18 December 2012]
- TAMO* (1583) *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* or *TAMO* (1583 edition) (Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011). [www.johnfoxe.org](http://www.johnfoxe.org) [accessed 18 December 2012]
- TNA SP The National Archives, State Papers

Latin biblical quotations are taken from St Jerome's *Nova vulgata Bibliorum sacrorum editio* (Vatican City, 1979); English biblical quotations are taken from Miles Coverdale's *Biblia the Bible* (Cologne?, 1535). I have used Coverdale's translation (rather than William Tyndale's, for instance) because it is this version that provides the source for the Psalm translations of Thomas Smith and Henry Howard, the earl of Surrey, amongst others. References to Psalms are by the Vulgate numbering.

Throughout this book, whenever a particular work was printed in more than one of John Foxe's and Henry Bull's publications (*Rerum*, *TAMO* (1563), *TAMO* (1570), *TAMO* (1583), and LM), reference will be made only to the earliest work in which it appears. However, if a holograph or early manuscript version of this work survives, reference will be made to that manuscript alone.