evidence? If we may have doubts about the suppression commissioners' accounts of houses 'in great ruin and decay' should we also be cautious about the 1528 indulgence which claimed that 'the greater part' of the house of Strata Marcella was 'broken down'? Does rebuilding imply confidence and economic security as recent work (James G. Clark, ed., *The Religious Orders in Pre-Reformation England* (2002); Martin Heale ed., *The Prelate in England and Europe, 1300-1560* (2014)) suggests (neither of which are referenced)? Or the need to assert monastic power and authority in a world where these were being challenged by lay authority; or simply the greater gap that was developing between both lay and ecclesiastical elites and their subordinates? And if we are to take this evidence of both decay and revival at face value, what is its significance? Why were some houses apparently ripe for suppression, while others might have survived and thrived in more politically propitious circumstances?

In his discussion of the Lincolnshire Rising and the Pilgrimage of Grace Williams argues that in all but one case the abbots and monks subsequently executed had had no choice but to comply with the demands of rebels and thus suffered 'needlessly and unjustly' but the evidence that he himself adduces suggests that in a number of cases monks and abbots were actively if sometimes ambivalently involved—William Moreland, for example, who protected the bishop of Lincoln's registrar from a violent mob, but also led rebels from Louth to Caistor while wearing armour. To see this as just a question of whether or not they should be seen as martyrs, or whether the monasteries 'needed' to be reformed is to see these events through a very narrow window. Moreland had already seen his house closed down, and the rebels were seeking to re-establish religious houses: joining them may have seemed his best hope of returning to the monastic life.

As these comments suggest this is a rather old-fashioned book, but it has many virtues: it is deeply rooted in the sources and quotes them extensively, often leaving interpretation to the reader. The appendices alone will be worth the price of the book to anyone interested in the prosopography of the Cistercians in this period.

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Ruth Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013; pp. ix + 222, £55, ISBN 978-1-107-04030-4

Ruth Ahnert's monograph, adapted from her doctoral work, argues that sixteenth-century prisons emerged 'as an important and

influential literary sphere' (p. 7) and that prison writing was 'one of the most influential cultural practices' (p. 201) in the period. She acknowledges the significance of prison literature produced in previous eras, but successfully argues that the political and religious ructions of the sixteenth century, in addition to the swell in the prison population, and the rise of print, enabled a concrete body of literature to emerge and leave 'its mark not only on the literary landscape but also on the politico-religious identity of the English nation' (p. 207).

Ahnert's argument is well-supported by case studies on either side of the religious divide, including the prison writings of the Catholic martyr-figures Sir Thomas More and John Fisher, the early Protestant reformer and martyr-figure John Frith, and the Marian martyr-figures Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, Thomas Cranmer and John Bradford. The inclusion of both Protestants and Catholics is a particular strength of the volume, as is Ahnert's use of various methodologies ranging from book history, network theory, phenomenology and philosophy—drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau—and close reading practices typically deployed by literary scholars. The volume is further strengthened by her determination 'to get as close to the original prison texts as possible, eschewing printed editions where an autograph or early manuscript is available' (p. 146). Her careful excavation of texts from their editorial and print packaging often renders fresh readings of well-known print editions, including John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and John Bale's *The first examinacyon of Anne Askew*, both of which were heavily altered for doctrinal ends.

Chapter One, 'The sixteenth-century prison', begins with an excavation beneath a powerful piece of print propaganda: the title page of Henry VIII's 'Great Bible' of 1539, the first royally commissioned Bible in English (pp. 8-9). Within this busy woodcut, citizens praise the King—'*Vivat Rex*' and 'God save the Kynge'—all except for the prisoners. The prison appears to silence those who would not accept Henry as head of the Church. Ahnert challenges this 'myth' by describing the heaving, dysfunctional and largely decentralized sixteenth-century prison system, the haphazard nature of which gave rise to the literature upon which she focuses.

Chapter Two, 'Writing the prison', examines an eclectic mix of prison writings: graffiti on the wall and page, illustrated with five black and white plates; the marginalia and prison works of Thomas More; and psalm translations by the Marian prisoners John Hooper and Bradford, as well as Anne Askew, Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey, Robert and John Dudley, Thomas Smith and Thomas Wyatt. While this chapter engages much of the significant primary and secondary literature about Tudor prison writings, its eclectic nature renders it the least successful chapter in the volume. This may stem from its origins in the doctoral

research process. Chapter Three, 'Prison communities', uses qualitative and quantitative methodologies to demonstrate how individuals and groups functioned within prisons. It begins with an overview of the qualitative approach to defining communities based upon shared space as pioneered by anthropologist Anthony Cohen, and then turns to quantitative methodologies, in particular network theory, which Ahnert has worked on since the publication of this volume (http://www.culturesofknowledge.org/?page_id=4593 and http://sixdegreesof francisbacon.com/). While Ahnert does not deploy pure quantitative analysis here, she does draw upon the concept of communities as networks, comprised of individuals (nodes) and connected by 'ties' of varying strengths: 'What the network perspective on community allows us to see, which an emphasis on place does not, is that prison communities were not bound by prison walls' (p. 76). Whereas Chapters One and Two bring the physical prison to life, the three subsequent chapters invite us to think beyond the prison.

Readers of this journal might be particularly interested in Ahnert's study of the 'ties' between John Fisher and Thomas More, whose use of the same unusual metaphor when interrogated separately on 3 June 1535 contributed to their conviction and execution for treason. The surviving interrogation documents reveal that each spoke of their predicament as a double-edged sword: to acknowledge Henry VIII as Supreme Ruler of the Church of England would risk the soul, while to refuse would risk the body. Interviews with Fisher and More's servants revealed that the two had communicated via letter (a strong tie) as to what answer to give regarding the Act of Supremacy. More allegedly described the double-edged sword metaphor, but later suggested Fisher not use it. More also asked Fisher to burn his letters (an attempt to hide their ties), which Fisher appears to have done. Nonetheless, their verbal echoes of one another raised suspicions. This is a powerful example of the dangers as well as the strengths of prison networks: More and Fisher exchanged spiritual comfort and advice, thus creating strong ties between them which they failed to hide. The remainder of Chapter Three is devoted to Margaret Douglas and Thomas Howard's love lyrics in the Devonshire manuscript; John Harrington's 'Booke of freendship' (the Arundel Harington MS) and the collaboratively authored 'conferences' of Ridley and Cranmer who participated in vast inter- and intra-prison textual networks.

Chapter Four, 'Frendes abrode', focuses on audiences beyond prisons, ranging from individual loved ones to communities eager for theological guidance. Case studies include Fisher's books of devotional guidance for his half-sister, Elizabeth White, a nun of Dartford Priory; the letters and texts of the Evangelical Henrician prisoner John Frith to fellow Christian Brethren, and the letter networks of the Protestant John Bradford. The section on Fisher and

White does not fit comfortably with the others, not because of their subjects' religious affiliations, but because of the differences in genre and intended audience. Ahnert's argument that Fisher's texts encouraged White to 'asocial' meditation, and a degree of interiority that might be read as 'dissident', is not entirely convincing (p.134). Solitary worship amongst monastics was normative: corporate worship was supposed to be complemented by additional periods of private devotion. Inward retreat was considered necessary to cultivating a relationship with God that would, in turn, sustain the life of the community.

Chapter Five, 'Liberating the text?' underscores that much prison literature ended up in print, but 'challenges the idea that print publication and the subsequent circulation of prison literature can unproblematically be described as a form of liberation' (p. 144). Texts used for polemical or political ends could be just as imprisoned as their creators. One of the ways in which Ahnert attempts to reverse this shackling is by drawing our attention to the editorial process underlying Foxe's *Book of Martyrs.* She examines letters exchanged by Foxe and his collaborator Edmund Grindal, one-time confessor to Edward VI. They worked on the *Rerum in Ecclesia gestarum*, which was eventually subsumed into *Booke of Martyrs.* In a letter to Foxe, Grindal lamented the publication of *The examinacion of […] Iohn Philpot* by another exiled Protestant press in 1556:

> …there are some things […] which need correction. He seems somehow to entangle himself in certain words not so well approved; as for instance, that Christ is really in the supper, etc. If the English book had not been published, some things in it might have been modified (pp.184-5).

This example reveals how Protestant authors (like their Catholic counterparts) wished to transform heterogeneous texts into a flawless narrative of theological continuity reaching back to the early Christian centuries. This instinct is rife throughout many polemical and hagiographical works in the period and requires careful close reading on our part today.

The Afterward traces how sixteenth-century prisons were represented in seventeenth-century drama, arguing that prison authors, texts and spaces were powerful symbols of religious and political foment. Ahnert concludes that prison literature 'created counter-publics' in which texts circulated 'offering social, political, and religious alternatives to those imposed by the authorities' (p. 200), as well as imaginative landscapes in which later authors could process the events of the previous century.

This volume has many strengths and will appeal to graduates and specialists in the fields of Tudor history, literature and theology, and might also interest network theorists. The footnoting and apparatus are generally quite helpful, though the index could have been more

fulsome. This is a strong first book and we can no doubt look forward to Ahnert's next project.

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Thomas F. Mayer, ed., *Reforming Reformation*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2012, pp. xiv +251, £70.00, ISBN: 978-1-409451-54-9

I really dislike reviewing books. They always take more time to write than anticipated and, like bills, they always come due at the worst possible times. You get free books, but you often offend colleagues and sometimes make enemies (admittedly, there some colleagues whose books I prefer to their friendship, but these are not the books which garner bad reviews). I agreed to review this book for personal reasons and regretted it almost immediately—until I actually read the volume. Given the contributors, I expected the chapters in this book to be of high quality, but I was surprised at how interesting and stimulating these chapters were. They were good enough, in fact, to make me momentarily forget my aversion to reviewing books.

The late Thomas F. Mayer was a formidably erudite scholar with extensive expertise in both early modern English and early modern Italian history. A striking indication of how extensive this expertise was is the fact that, among his last works, Mayer authored two brilliant prosopographical studies anchored in each society, one on the Sacred Congregation under Urban VIII (in his monograph *The Roman Inquisition*) and one on English cathedral clergy in mid-Tudor England (in a forthcoming collection *Catholic Renewal and Protestant Resistance in Marian England,* edited by Elizabeth Evenden and Vivienne Westbrook). *Reforming Reformation* grew out of a conference organised by Mayer, and both the conference and the volume reflect Mayer's interests quite closely, perhaps too closely. The volume covers England, Italy, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire in admirable depth, but puzzlingly, not France. (Mayer offers the rather opaque explanation that 'France had to be excluded for lack of resources' [p. 1]).

The first section of *Reforming Reformation* deals with major issues in Reformation historiography. Brad Gregory opens the volume with a lively and insightful chapter, describing the marginalization of radical Protestantism by scholars and persuasively arguing that understanding radical Protestantism is crucial to understanding Protestantism itself. This chapter should be widely read by both teachers and students. Peter Marshall applies the concept of confessionalization to England and