

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910463227503321
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Titolo	Censorship and cultural sensibility [[electronic resource] ] : the regulation of language in Tudor-Stuart England / / Debora Shuger
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Philadelphia, : University of Pennsylvania Press, c2006
ISBN	0-8122-0334-8
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (355 p.)
Disciplina	342.4208/53
Soggetti	Freedom of the press - England - History - 16th century Freedom of the press - England - History - 17th century Politeness (Linguistics) - England - History - 16th century Politeness (Linguistics) - England - History - 17th century Electronic books.
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. [277]-335) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Introduction -- Chapter 1. "That Great and Immoderate Liberty of Lying" -- Chapter 2. The Index and the English: Two Traditions of Early Modern Censorship -- Chapter 3. Roman Law -- Chapter 4. The Christian Transmission of Roman Law Iniuria -- Chapter 5. The Law of All Civility -- Chapter 6. Defendants' Rights and Poetic Justice -- Chapter 7. Hermeneutics, History, and the Delegitimation of Censorship -- Chapter 8. Intent -- Chapter 9. Ideological Censorship -- Notes -- Bibliography -- Index -- Acknowledgments
Sommario/riassunto	In this study of the reciprocities binding religion, politics, law, and literature, Debora Shuger offers a profoundly new history of early modern English censorship, one that bears centrally on issues still current: the rhetoric of ideological extremism, the use of defamation to ruin political opponents, the grounding of law in theological ethics, and the terrible fragility of public spheres. Starting from the question of why no one prior to the mid-1640s argued for free speech or a free press per se, Censorship and Cultural Sensibility surveys the texts against which Tudor-Stuart censorship aimed its biggest guns, which turned out not to be principled dissent but libels, conspiracy fantasies, and hate speech. The book explores the laws that attempted to

suppress such material, the cultural values that underwrote this regulation, and, finally, the very different framework of assumptions whose gradual adoption rendered censorship illegitimate. Virtually all substantive law on language concerned defamation, regulating what one could say about other people. Hence Tudor-Stuart laws extended protection only to the person hurt by another's words, never to their speaker. In treating transgressive language as akin to battery, English law differed fundamentally from papal censorship, which construed its target as heresy. There were thus two models of censorship operative in the early modern period, both premised on religious norms, but one concerned primarily with false accusation and libel, the other with false belief and immorality. Shuger investigates the first of these models—the dominant English one—tracing its complex origins in the Roman law of iniuria through medieval theological ethics and Continental jurisprudence to its continuities and discontinuities with current U.S. law. In so doing, she enables her reader to grasp how in certain contexts censorship could be understood as safeguarding both charitable community and personal dignitary rights.

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