

ESF Exploratory Workshop on

# Reading and Censorship in Early Modern Europe

Co-sponsored by



Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

## Scientific Report

Barcelona, Spain, 10-12 December 2007

Convened by

**Pr. Dr. María José Vega**  
(Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona)

**Seminario de Poética Europea del Renacimiento**

Casa de Convalecencia

Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona

## Executive Summary

**Executive Summary** The ESF Exploratory Workshop took place in Barcelona between December 10th and 12th, in the Casa de Convalecència de la Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona (for the definitive programme see below). As planned, it gathered scholars from five countries (France, Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom, and Spain), all specialists in various branches of history (cultural, social and religious history) and literature (history of the book, comparative and national literatures, literary theory). The project was also supported by scholars and specialists who for professional reasons were unable to attend the meeting.

The Workshop was organized around five sessions which, from a variety of perspectives, explored the theory and practice of censorship in Early Modern Europe, particularly in countries that were not dominated by the Protestant Reformation, and were subject to the successive *Index of Prohibited Books*. Each session closed with participants engaged in open discussion. On the 13th December, the organizers and some participants held a closed meeting in order to discuss arrangements for financing and co-sponsoring future meetings, research and publishing projects. The workshop participants were encouraged to introduce a comparative perspective, and the programme was organized to maximize scholarly discussion. The sessions were inaugurated by the convenors, who provided the background to the main subjects, set the case for the workshop and framed the many questions and the main points to be discussed in the sessions.

The feedback was extremely positive, with special attention drawn to the high quality of the papers, the timeliness and transdisciplinarity of the approach and the scientific qualifications of the participants.

The EW was held in two rooms of the *Casa de Convalescència* de la Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona ([http://www.uabcampus.com/cast/index\\_vert2.html](http://www.uabcampus.com/cast/index_vert2.html)), near Gaudí's Temple of La Sagrada Família, not far from the city centre. The collaboration of junior members of the Seminar of European Renaissance Poetics (UAB) was indispensable to the successful organization of the EW on a practical level: they assumed responsibility for the hotel arrangements, catering, transport, xeroxing and printing, and were also available to offer interpreting assistance to the representative of the ESF, and others as required.

All participants were extremely pleased with the organization, the atmosphere and content of the EW. The EW had set five languages for presentations and scientific exchange (in alphabetical order: English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish). The EW was, therefore, a multilingual experience that mirrored the linguistic variety and richness of European academic life.

# Final Programme

## READING AND CENSORSHIP IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE

### *Final programme*

The Exploratory Workshop consisted of five thematic sessions, with 30 minutes papers and equal time for discussion. To facilitate discussion, participants were invited to introduce the latest research in their field, as it relates to the issues raised in the workshop and to present materials for discussion and further research.

### MONDAY 10

18:00-19:00      Arrival: Hotel Sant Pau.  
Reception / Registration: Hotel Sant Pau

### TUESDAY 11

08:30            Recepción / Registration: *Casa de Convalecencia*  
                    Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Rooms 10-12.  
09:00            Opening Address and Welcome. Presentation of ESF activities.  
09:30            Prof. Dr. María José Vega, *The case for an Exploratory Workshop: Reading and Censorship in Early Modern Europe*

### Work Session I Censorship and Reading Communities

#### 10:00-11:00 Presentations

Pedro Cátedra, *Comunidades textuales y censura inquisitorial en el siglo XVI*  
Julian Weiss, *Guided Reading: Censorship and the Emergence of the Literary Subject*

#### 11:00 – 11:30 Discussion

Chairperson: Prof. Dr. María José Vega

11:30- 12:00 *Coffee Break: Terrasse and Open Gardens*

### Work Session II Towards a Poetics of Literary Censorship

#### 12:00-13:00 Presentations

Prof. Dr. Marie-Luce Demonet, *La censure de la fiction dans la Renaissance française et ses fondements philosophiques européens*  
Dr. Donatella Gagliardi, *La teoria della censura en el Theotimus de Puterbo*

**13:00- 13:30 Summary and Discussion**

**Chairperson:** Prof. Dr. Roger Chartier

13:30 - *Lunch. Salones y Jardines de la Casa de Convalecencia*

i

**Work Session III**

**Church and Censorship. Bibles and Devotional Books**

**15:30-16:30 Presentations**

Prof. Dr. Gigliola Fragnito, *La censura ecclesiastica in Italia: volgarizzamenti biblici e letteratura all' Indice. Bilancio degli studi e prospettive di ricerca*

Dr. Giorgio Caravale, *Le orazioni proibite: censura ecclesiastica e letteratura devozionale nel XVI secolo. Problemi e prospettive di ricerca*

**16:30-17:00 Summary and Discussion**

**Chairperson:** Dr. Donatella Gagliardi

17:00- 17:30 *Coffee Break. Salón de la Casa de Convalecencia.*

**Work Session IV**

**Soft Censorship and Bad Books in European Literature**

**17:30- 18:30 Presentations**

Prof. Dr. Zulmira Santos, *Prólogos, censuras e censuras difusas: literatura de ficção e leituras femininas*

Prof. Dr. Emilio Blanco, *Malos libros y censura difusa en Antonio de Guevara*

**18:30-19:15 Summary and Discussion**

**Chairperson:** Dr. Lara Vilà

19:15 *Cava / Toast*

**WEDNESDAY 12**

**Work Session V**

**Dangerous Literature. Case Studies**

**09:00 – 10:30 Presentations**

Prof. Dr. Robert Archer, *Canon and Censorship / Canon y censura: fortuna de un poema de Ausiàs March*

Prof. Dr. Rosa Navarro, *Materia peligrosa: la censura de las obras de Alfonso de Valdés*

Lurdes Correia Fernandes, *No siempre la censura fue previsible. El caso del Principio de divino amor*

Prof. Dr. Augusto Cardoso Bernardes, *Pastores e filósofos na Corte de D. João III: Gil Vicente e a palavra velada*

**10:30-11:15: Summary and Discussion**

**Chairperson:** Prof. Dr. Emilio Blanco

*11:15- 11:45 Pausa / Coffee Break*

**11:45-12:45 Presentations**

Dr. Emily Butterworth, *Self-censorship and Silence: The Cases of Slander and Obscenity*

Prof. Dr. Roger Chartier, *Entre manuscrito clandestino y libro impreso. Las censuras de los Viajes de Cyrano de Bergerac*

**12:45-13:30: Summary and Discussion**

**Chairperson:** Prof. Dr. Julian Weiss

*13:30 Lunch. Salones de la Casa de Convalecencia.*

*Censorship and Textual Criticism*

**15:30- 16:00 Presentations**

Prof. Dr. Francisco Rico, *Ecdotica della censura*

**Chairperson:** Dr. Cesc Esteve

*16:30-17:00 Coffee Break*

**17:00-18:00 Final Work Session** –Conclusions of the Workshop and discussion and planning of potential research and future collaborative actions. **Chairperson:** Julian Weiss.

**THURSDAY 13**

**10:00-13:30 Closed Work Session (convenors and local organizers). Planning of future actions and meetings** Location: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Facultat de Lletres, Campus de Bellaterra. Rooms of the *Seminario de Poética Europea del Renacimiento*.

–*Seminario de Poética Europea del Renacimiento*. Discussion about potential financial sources in Spain for the book *Reading and Censorship in Early Modern Europe*. Discussion about the submission of a publication project to the Ministerio de Educación (Programme of *Acciones Complementarias*) and about the financial collaboration of the *Seminario de Poética Europea del Renacimiento* with its own funds.

- Discussion about the creation of a website for the EW and the organization of future collaborative projects.  
**Chairperson:** Cesc Esteve.

**Languages of the EW:** Five languages were considered for abstracts and presentations: English, Spanish, French, Portuguese and Italian (see *Abstracts* document). Debates and discussions were held in all five languages.

## SCIENTIFIC CONTENT

*Objectives and premises:* The participants in the EW approached the question of reading and censorship in early modern Europe from a comparatist perspective. Although the specificities of local circumstances and national literary traditions were acknowledged, this did not obscure the international scope and scale of the early modern cultural exchange, with its internationalized book market and continued reliance on Latin as scholarly *lingua franca*. As explained in our original proposal, our geographic focus was on Catholic and Counter-Reformation Europe. Within those limits, our supranational perspective highlighted the way in which censorship functioned not only as a particular form of textual control, and as the effective exercise of religious and secular power in particular times and places, but also, more broadly, as the object of a theoretical discourse: the practice of censorship was self-reflexive, in that it aimed to legitimise itself in political and moral terms in an ideological process rooted in a theory of reading. Reading required, indeed presupposes, censorship: in part because it was understood that written texts could disseminate political and religious dissent, shape good or bad believers and citizens; but more profoundly, because it was understood that writing and reading were a fundamental element in the social construction of consciousness itself.

*Recent research:* The classic monographs on censorship (from the famous works of Reusch and Hilgers in the XIXc, to the studies by Firpo, Rotondò, López o Grendler which were published around the mid XXc) were all written without complete access to the Vatican's archives. Gradually, research in the field benefitted immensely from the monumental publication of the *Index des livres interdits* (Droz, 1984-1996), in ten volumes under the general editorship of Jesús Martínez de Bujanda. Examples of the new impetus created by improved documentary evidence—we now have complete lists of censored books—are two volumes published in 1997: Ugo Rozzo (ed.) *La censura libraria nell' Europa del secolo sedicesimo*, and Gigliola Fragnito, *La Bibbia al Rogo*, (on censorship of the vernacular bibles in Catholic Europe). However, the following year, 1998, marked a watershed in the study of Counter-Reformation censorship with the definitive opening of the relevant Vatican archives, which sparked even more interest in the expurgation and circulation of books (both manuscript and printed), as well as in the modes of writing that were current in moments of intolerance and persecution (e.g., techniques of dissimulation, ambiguity, and self-censorship). And since 1998, the history of forbidden books has been enriched by the discovery of even more documentary evidence concerning the drafting of Indices that were eventually published.

Improved documentary evidence has enhanced and enriched the most recent publications (e.g. Cristiana Stango, *Censura ecclesiastica e cultura politica tra Cinquecento e Seicento*, 1999; Gigliola Fragnito, *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Europe*, 2001; Giorgio Caravale *La orazione proibita*, 2004, and the numerous studies on the history of the book by Roger Chartier, Pedro Cátedra, among others). But methodologically, this body of work is characterised by a broader and more nuanced understanding of the social impact of censorship. From a variety of perspectives, recent scholars go beyond emphasising its purely negative, repressive aspects: they shed light on the specific organizational mechanisms and administrative practices that made possible—and also betrayed the weaknesses of—the control of books and their readers in all kinds of cultural domain and intellectual communities (literature, science, religion, law, and so forth). In short, our

Workshop took place at a crucial moment in the history of scholarship on censorship in early modern Catholic Europe: it occurred at the conjuncture of recent archival discoveries and new methodological approaches, which enabled us to reassess and debate the reach and role of censorship in the construction of the early modern State and its political, religious, and cultural subjects.

What follows is a report on the principal problems that emerged collaboratively in the group discussions that followed each session. (We do not structure this report according to the contents of each paper, since these are summarised in the abstracts.)

*Reading and the necessity of guilt:* Discussions highlighted the increasing desire to subject reading to institutional control in the course of the XVIc, based on the perception of reading as an act fraught with danger. In the religious sphere, inquisitorial vigilance of books worked in tandem with the ecclesiastical control of the soul—through the practice of confession—and thus linked the public control of what was read to the private control of conscience. The combination of visible and internalised forms of control, coupled with the obligation to denounce infractions, eventually created a pervasive climate of suspicion for those who possessed books for professional reasons (e.g. students, professors, editors, jurists), as well as for those who read fiction for pleasure. The period consolidated—indeed institutionalised—an association between books and guilt that has had long-lasting consequences.

*Humanism's embedded censorship:* The theory and justification of censorship should not be construed simplistically as the prejudice of fanatical and philistine clerics: this false dichotomy overlooks the active involvement of lay and professional intellectuals in the process of expurgating texts. Humanists themselves were suspicious of the free circulation of allegedly immoral books, or in some cases any books, among the lower classes, women, or youths. The way humanists (especially in their *rationes studiorum* of the late XVc and early XVIc) confronted the spread of lay literacy and the expanding international book market was the subject of much discussion: humanist censorship sheds light upon the conflicts and uncertainties surrounding social status, function and efficacy of those who assumed the public role of the intellectual, even as it speaks of the ways in which the discourses of humanism defended its own interests and constructed subaltern groups over whom it exercised control, notably in the highly debated question of female literacy.

*Censorship, the theoretical corpus:* The importance of returning to primary sources was emphasized: we still need to create an inventory of the foundational texts that would help us to analyse in greater depth and with greater subtlety the intellectual justifications for expurgating or prohibiting literature that could be considered dangerous, whether for religious, moral, political or even ontological reasons (since the very existence of persuasive fiction undermines the authority of truth). Two key texts in this regard are *Theotimus sive de tollendis et expungendis libris* (1549), by the Parisian theologian Gabriel Putherbeus (which still lacks a proper critical edition), and *Bibliotheca Selecta* by Possevino, which may be read as a Counter-Reformation response to Gesner's *Bibliotheca Universalis*. These and other works illustrate, amongst other things, the attempt to establish some conceptual foundation for the relationship between fiction and heresy. Indeed, this was just one of the contexts in which the theoretical basis of fiction itself was discussed. Another important body of

writing needs to be incorporated into the corpus of primary texts: philosophical treatises that deal with the concept of *umbræ entium* (the phrase coined by Catholic theologians for ‘fiction’). This fascinating category goes beyond Aristotelian notions of mimesis and opens up a *spatium imaginarium*, which blurs the distinction between truth and fiction, the verifiable and the possible; this ‘imaginative space’ has potentially valuable religious and ethical uses, and thus it creates a much more positive philosophical justification for the category ‘fiction’.

*Censorship and the creation of ‘literature’*: Discussing the definition, dangers and possibilities of the protean category ‘fiction’ overlapped with discussions of other aspects of the category ‘literature’. Indeed, although its effects vary according to genre (lyric and drama were regulated quite differently), censorship had a vital role to play in the construction of the very category ‘literature’ itself. For example, the myriad of ways in which editors, scribes, and printers intervened in the transmission of texts shows works could be utterly transformed in the process. In these circumstances, what do we mean by ‘the literary text’? *Mouvance* is still a fact of textual transmission, as it was in the Middle Ages. Moreover, the existence of censorship could facilitate the growth of particular genres (the dialogue, the essay, which attenuated the writer’s authoritative stance), encourage particular modes of writing (ambiguity, dissimulation), promote anonymity and pseudonyms (or false colophons in printed books), make writers reluctant to publish in printed form and circulate manuscripts among a coterie of acquaintances. All these facts help us historicise the category ‘author’ and ‘book’. The relation between censorship and literary criticism was also discussed: the common vocabularies of the censor and the philological critic, the moral imperative of literary commentary, and the construction of modern vernacular classics and national canons all show how the emergent discourses of literature and the sophisticated reading subject are intertwined with the institutional practice of censorship.

*Censorship and the substitution of literature*: Besides shaping the evolution of discourses that we might categorise as ‘literary’, censorship could also promote other forms of dissemination, both oral and written, which shaped other forms of subjectivity and communal identity. For example, to avoid scrutiny written texts could be memorised and incorporated into what one scholar labelled *bibliotecas de la memoria*, compiled to consolidate a particular textual community, in a process that was especially common amongst the popular classes. In addition, the Inquisition’s attempts to regulate devotional or religious literature (e.g., prohibiting books of hours, controlling prayer and the exposition of prayer) slowed the spread of sophisticated and independent literacy by substituting for the Bible approved devotional texts designed for the masses and female readers. This process has profound implications for the history of early modern European spirituality and subjectivity.

*Future paths*: Although each of the points above needs to be explored further, both in general and through particular case studies, the participants also noted a number of other avenues for research: broadening the geographical and cultural scope (establishing a dialogue between our field and recent research on Reformation Europe and the New World); developing a more focussed analysis of how censorship intersects with class, ethnicity or gender; pursuing the ‘dreams of censorship’—how it aspired to control even things that had yet to be written—or, conversely, studying the ‘hospitals of books’, the refuge of prohibited works that were still to be written but which held out the hope of an alternative world.

## FUTURE COLLABORATIVE ACTIONS

The participants in the EW agreed to collaborate in future research actions and meetings. Key objectives include the publication of the *Proceedings*, the creation of an international network of research on *Censorship and literature in Early Modern Europe*, the exchange and training of young scientists in the I+D centers and universities involved in the EW, and the edition of primary sources on censorship.

**- Publication of the Proceedings** and designation of a **scientific board**, with one member for each linguistic area. The scientific board will assume (a) the reading and revision of manuscripts about content, format and style issues; (b) the diffusion of the EW and of the research network activities in their national and linguistic areas. The publication of the Proceedings will be financed by the ESF with the co-sponsoring of other institutions (Seminario de Poética Europea del Renacimiento,

The *Proceedings* will publish the papers in more elaborated versions, taking into account the discussions and debates held during the EW.

*Scientific Board:* **Prof. Dr. Gigliola Fragnito** (Università degli Studi di Parma); **Prof. Dr. Pedro Cátedra** (Universidad de Salamanca and Director of the International Research Center CiLengua and Bibliotheca Hispanica), **Prof. Dr. Marie-Luce Demonet** (Université de Tours and ), **Prof. Dr. Zulmira Santos** (Director of the Centre de historia de la espiritualidad de Oporto) and **Prof. Dr. Julian Weiss** (King's College London).

*Funding and local sponsoring:* Cesc Esteve (King's College) and Iveta Nakládalová (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). *Funding and European sponsoring:* Lara Vilà (Universitat de Girona). *Local Organizer:* Iveta Nakládalová.

**- Creation of a network** for further collaborative action and future research. The network includes: (a) all participants willing to proceed with the lines of research discussed and planned in the EW, and to collaborate in the editions of capital texts for the history and theory of censorship in Early Modern Europe; (2) all participants and well known researchers in these field of studies who were unable to assist to the EW for academic or personal reasons, but had openly adhered to its principles; (c) new I+D groups and researchers of international reputation who were left aside in the first meeting but are willing to collaborate in future research on censorship and can provide a more international approach to the history and theory of censorship. Special reference must be made to the invitation to join the network to *La Maison d'Erasmus* in Brussels and his director, Alexander Vanautgaerden.

**- Creation of a website** (already in progress) which will provide an interdisciplinary forum for members of the network and will work as an instrument of exchange, contact and publication. It will include information about meetings, proceedings and publication of scientific books in the field, and will ensure access to the network activities to all the relevant research community. The open website will be sponsored by the *Seminario de Poética Europea del Renacimiento* (Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona). In the near future, a digital library of the most significant documents on literary censorship will be added.

**- Edition of Early Modern Texts on Censorship.** Edition (january- march) of one of the main texts for the poetics and politics of literary censorship in Early Modern Europe: the *Theotimus* of the theologian Gabriel Putherbeus (Paris, 1549) but read all over Europe. It will be edited by María José Vega and Lara Vilà, with an introduction by Donatella

Gagliardi, in the *Bibliotheca Sphaerica*, Barcelona, 2008. This is the first of a collection which will provide modern, digital and accesible editions of primary sources relevant to the study of censorship and literature in Early Modern Europe. The first edition, is co-sponsored and financed by the ESF and the Generalitat de Catalunya. Further editions will be financed (in 2008-2009) by the Generalitat de Catalunya, the *Seminario de Poética Europea del Renacimiento*, the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the *Instituto Séneca* de Investigación Superior de la Universidad Carlos III de Madrid and the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia de España. Members of the network will obtain futher sponsoring for 2009 and 2010 with local and national research and academic authorities. Copies of these editions will be sent to the ESF.

**.- Publicacion of a monographic issue of *STUDIA AUREA*.** New collaborative studies, documents and case studies will be published in an special number of the scholarly journal *Studia Aurea* (2010) devoted to *Censorship and European Literature in Early Modern Europe*. *Studia Aurea* is a journal on Early Modern Literary Studies (peer reviewed and with an international scientific board) that regularly publishes articles and documents on literary theory and cultural history from the late fifteenth to the early seventeenth centuries. It provides a venue for exchange between European scholars in diverse fields (philology and literary criticism, cultural history, iconology and musicology as related to textual issues). Cfr. [www.studiaaurea.com](http://www.studiaaurea.com)

**.- Meeting for the Network of Research Gropus and Institutions.** Meeting sponsored with local and national funds to promote further collaborative actions of the Network and to set the scientific agenda for the next four years. Participants include Alexander Vanautgaerden (Belgium), María José Vega (Spain), Marie-Luce Demonet (France), Gigliola Fragnito (Italy), Zulmira Santos (Portugal) and Julian Weiss (United Kingdom). Local organizer: Prof. Dr. Pedro Cátedra. Participants will consider the oportunity to bring together national funded research activities to address major issues on censorship at the European level, and to outline a research programme of high scientific quality. The meeting will take place in the research institute *Biblioteca Hispánica* (Cilengua: see [http://www.cilengua.es/index.asp?pagina\\_e=11](http://www.cilengua.es/index.asp?pagina_e=11)), in the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla (Rioja, Spain; see [http://www.cilengua.es/index.asp?pagina\\_e=7](http://www.cilengua.es/index.asp?pagina_e=7) and <http://www.monasteriodeyuso.org/index2.html>). The institute *Bibliotheca Hispanica* will provide for the location of the activities and accomodation in the monastic <http://www.emeieme.com/proyectos/sanmillan/hotelsm.asp>)

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## STATISTICS

### Gender

Convenor: *Female*  
*Female*: Nine participants  
*Male*: Nine participants

### Age

Convenor: *Age 40-50*  
*Age 30-40*: Five participants  
*Age 40-50*: Three participants  
*Age 50-60*: Four participants  
*Age over 60*: Five participants

### Country

Convenor: *Spain*  
*France*: Two participants  
*Italy*: Four participants  
*Portugal*: Three Participants  
*Spain*: Four Participants  
*United Kingdom*: Four Participants

Three professors (from France, Italy and Portugal)  
could not attend the EW for professional and personal reasons.