

María José Vega, Julian Weiss, and Cesc Esteve, eds. *Reading and Censorship in Early Modern Europe*.

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María José Vega and Iveta Nakládálová, eds. *Lectura y culpa en el siglo XVI / Reading and Guilt in the 16th Century*.

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These two edited volumes address the complex negotiations related to reading, writing, and censorship in the context of early modern Europe. What is particularly original and promising is how the collections address these issues in a variety of national traditions and from diverse interpretative perspectives (literary, historical, and religious). Both volumes, then, offer valuable contributions to the ongoing interdisciplinary work that explores the nuances of how socioreligious contexts influenced or were critiqued by early modern authors and readers. The two editions do an excellent job of demonstrating how certain aspects of censorship transcend national boundaries, while not losing sight of the specificities of the particular literary-historical milieu under examination. What is more, they both probe the cultural, political, and social dimensions of the censorial process.

Censorship, as we know, was sponsored by ecclesiastical and state institutions, and it took various forms, including, but certainly not limited to, the indices of prohibited books. The aspect that is often more difficult to pin down deals with self-censorship by individuals or groups, that is, the possible internalization of censorship and its effects on cultural, religious, and political practices. Both volumes attempt to investigate this more elusive theme and suggest some productive ways of grappling with this critical facet. Among other topics, the contributors consider the politics of suppressing heterodox thought and the subsequent association of the act of reading with danger and guilt.

Reading and Censorship in Early Modern Europe, which is based on presentations made at a workshop on the topic held in Barcelona in 2007, takes as its point of departure the need for comparative approaches in order to better understand censorship in the broader context of Catholic Western Europe, more specifically Italy, France, Portugal, and Spain. This kind of approach allows for a “more supple conception of censorship . . . dwelling on its constitutive role in the construction of civil life” (12). One of the volume’s premises, therefore, is that the act of controlling the book via censorship was directly related to the desire to shape the conduct of readers, and as a result, the broader social context.

This volume is organized into four sections. The first deals with the Church's attempts to regulate the printing and reading of secular fiction and devotional literature written by the laity, with a particular focus on the topic in Italy and Spain. Giorgio Caravale's discussion of the prohibition of prayer and the question of devotional literature is of particular note. However, the studies by Gigliola Fragnito on ecclesiastic censorship in Italy and Emilio Blanco's analysis of the ways Franciscan friar Antonio de Guevara discussed censorship and the problems of literature for entertainment purposes are both enlightening and thought-provoking as well. The second section focuses more specifically on the issue of literature and how the changing concept of literature molded or redirected the freedoms of both readers and writers. Julian Weiss proposes that the ideal reader for what he calls the vernacular "classic" ought to be both a critic and censor, thus demonstrating the internalization of censorial discourses and practices. José Augusto Cardoso's reading of the Portuguese dramatist Gil Vicente's authorial persona as directly shaped by his various institutional relationships speaks to the very real necessity of authors to navigate often stormy political and religious seas.

Section three engages directly with self-censorship, in particular the use of literary pseudonyms and the restraints of rhetorical decorum. Rosa Navarro examines the case of Alfonso de Valdés and what happens when the veil of anonymity fails to protect an author completely. Emily Butterworth focuses on the writing of Michel de Montaigne and Robert Estienne, a humanist printer, in the context of early modern France, to demonstrate the relationship between and among censorship, slander, and correction. The final section contains two contributions that reflect on imaginative literature and the writer's creative imagination. In her study of early modern literature, Marie-Luce Demonet, who draws most of her examples from the French context, states that the imaginative spaces that novels, drama, and romances allowed people to conceive could not always be defended philosophically or morally. Roger Chartier's contribution investigates the censorship of Cyrano de Bergerac's proto-science fictional work to better understand its origin, whether authorial, editorial, or a combination of the two. He is interested in the limits of the early modern censor, especially given the circulation of work as a manuscript that went on to be changed, either by the author or at the behest of the publisher, when it circulated in printed form.

Lectura y culpa en el siglo XVI continues the comparative approach seen in *Reading and Censorship* by offering analyses related to Italy, Spain, and France. The volume is divided into three sections: secret, culpable, and illicit readings; the laboratory of the censor; and strategies of self-censorship. The first section deals with the consequences of censorship by religious institutions on the history of the book and reading in Spain and Italy. Fragnito explores the methods used by institutions to instill fear of the book in readers as well as the association between the book and sin. Ignacio García Pinilla and Javier San José Larra focus on the Spanish contexts, namely the place of reading and books for a Protestant group in Seville, and the place of reading and its representation in the Inquisitorial trials of professors from the University of Salamanca, respectively. Caravale analyzes the effect of

Church-sponsored censorship on the uneducated and its connection with the Counter-Reformation goal of infantilizing believers in Cinquecento Italy.

In the second section we have contributions related to the censorship of a particular author or text. Alexander Vanautgaerden focuses on the scrutiny of the work by Erasmus of Rotterdam based on the work of his first censor, Jean Henten. Simona Munari examines how *Cymbalum mundi* by Bonaventure des Périers fared with the censors. The third and final section regarding self-censorship offers a study on how “sins of the tongue” like blasphemy were condemned both in literature and everyday life (Demonet) and a focused study on how Torquato Tasso engaged in a meticulous process of self-censorship (Antonio Corsaro).

Because of the clear thematic connections, as well as partial overlap of authors and editors, these two volumes are complementary and offer engaging, yet varied, material for consideration. Though reading and censorship are well-trodden fields of investigation, the approaches to the work of authors and censors, studied alongside issues of writing, reception, and interpretation offer fresh insights and contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of these complex, salient themes. Both compilations are logically organized according to the topics outlined above and each individual intervention presents its argument in a cogent fashion.

While each study is rich and engaging in its own right, the real strength of the collections lies in how they bring together such diverse discussions to enrich and broaden our understanding of reading, writing, and control. The volumes would be of interest to students and scholars of the topic of censorship in early modern Europe, but they will appeal more broadly to those concerned with the history of reading. Scholars of history as well as religious and literary studies will find the approaches to be innovative and productive. One possible drawback of both collections is that the contributions appear in a variety of languages: English, French, Italian, and Spanish. Therefore, readers should have a few dictionaries on hand if they are not proficient in all four languages.

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