

Evaluation by Grant Committee: *An excellent proposal; the author has found fascinating materials and is analyzing them with sophistication. The juxtaposition of material history, intellectual history, religious history, and medical history is part of what makes this proposal compelling. The author has two impressive publications already, as well as some other awards including the current grant in Rome. We do not see too many proposals in the history of medicine and the history of science—this is a refreshing change-of-pace, even if the locale (Counter-Reformation Rome) is a familiar one.*

“Banned Books: Medicine, Readers, and Censors in Early Modern Italy, 1559-1664”

(Non-doctoral scholar, 2014)

In 1559, amidst the turmoil of the Reformation, Pope Paul IV issued from Rome the first papally declared Index of Prohibited Books. The list banned more than 583 authors and their works, which the Church deemed religiously threatening and morally pernicious. Many of these newly banned books championed the cutting edge scholarship of the sixteenth century. The intellectual content of these writings was often not inherently heretical; however, their authors were suspected of being or condemned as heretics and the works were therefore prohibited. My dissertation tells the story of how medical books were prohibited and subsequently reintegrated into the realm of Catholic knowledge in the period between the first issue of the Pauline Index in 1559 and the Alexandrine Index of 1664. This study of censors and scholars, books and libraries, and above all the contested status of medical knowledge reveals the complex interplay between intellectual controls and the utility of prohibited knowledge in Counter Reformation Italy.

My research focuses on a canon of texts, which I have defined by selecting the works of the most requested prohibited physicians from requests for reading licenses in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. I examine this group of physicians—including, but not limited to, Leonhart Fuchs, Conrad Gesner, Girolamo Cardano, Amatus Lusitanus, and Arnaldo de Villa Nova—and their works as containing a body of prohibited knowledge that physicians and Catholic authorities alike worked hard to make available for scholars in Italy. Individual censors, like Girolamo Rossi of Ravenna, and teams of censors, like the expurgatory congregation convened in Padua in 1597, submitted reports to the Congregation of the Index of Prohibited Books in Rome suggesting ways to correct and republish books by these prohibited authors whose works were so widely requested. My research at this stage suggests that ecclesiastical censorship was not imposed from the top down but was instead part of a negotiated conversation about the purpose and use of medical knowledge. Censorship did impose a series of rules and regulations on reading, but my research reveals the ways in which those regulations were implemented and ignored at the level of individuals whose stories are complicated, contradictory, and deserving of further study.

Methodologically, my research is based on both a traditional study of archival materials, primarily housed in the Archive of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith (ACDF), and a deep analysis of the expurgated books themselves informed by bibliographical techniques. There has been substantial recent work on the Roman

Inquisition and the Index since the opening of the ACDF in 1998, but my work is the first to acknowledge the physical, censored book as central to this study. In archives across Italy I have sought out the very objects that were subject to expurgation over four hundred years ago. While inquisitors burned some books, censors and scholars selectively expurgated others, correcting books with a pen, knife, or even gluing scraps of paper over controversial sections. Readers and Catholic authorities understood the printed book as an intellectual threat and also a physical object that could be manipulated and regulated. While in a sense the Congregation of the Index explicitly delineated an “ideal copy” of censored books, my initial research clearly shows that censors and scholars applied these rules in a variety of ways and with clearly different intents. From a thin diagonal line across a paragraph to blacking out whole pages or even removing them entirely with a razor, readers participated in the order “*et deletis et abrais*” in ways that reinterpreted and sometimes even undermined official edicts. By combining these two approaches, historical and bibliographical, I am delving into the medical books themselves as a kind of lost archive about the process of censorship. This archive reveals the varied forms in which readers encountered books and negotiated the unstable relationships between reading, writing, and orthodoxy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Thus far, I have tracked down and examined close to fifty mutilated copies of works by prohibited physicians. I found these copies in the libraries of Rome, the Vatican, and nearly every other Italian city I have had the opportunity to visit. I will continue this work through the end of my current research grant in August 2014. Unfortunately, two of the most important collections of books at the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV) are closed for cleaning for the entirety of my stay in Rome. With a research grant from the Renaissance Society of America, I propose to return to Rome for a month in the winter or spring of 2015 to examine censored medical texts that are held in the Chigi Collection and especially the Sant’ Officio Collection, which holds works that were once part of the library of the Roman Inquisition. The RSA fellowship would also enable me to obtain images of some of the materials in the BAV which I will help me to visually reveal the diversity of physical alterations in early modern books.

With the assistance of the RSA fellowship I would consult the materials necessary to complete the final two chapters of my dissertation. Chapters 1-4 of my dissertation describe the people (censors and scholars) involved in the censorship of medical texts and the decisions they reached about how those works should be expurgated. Chapter 5 considers the expurgated books themselves to evaluate the gap between real and ideal visions of censorship. Finally, Chapter 6 treats libraries as repositories of Catholic knowledge. These libraries, like the BAV, were formed and rapidly expanding in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and became home to vast quantities of individual censored books, like those discussed in Chapter 5. An analysis of the holdings of the Chigi and Sant’ Officio Collections would provide me with important material for drawing conclusions about the relationship between individual censored books and the project of book collecting in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Italy. I plan to finish my dissertation by the spring of 2016.