Introduction

Censorship, Society, and Literary Life in Imperial Germany

Then the first thing will be to establish a censorship of the writers of fiction, and let the censors receive any tale of fiction which is good, and reject those bad.
—Plato, *The Republic*, Book II

There was, besides, full freedom of thought,
Enjoyed by the masses of the nation;
Restrictions applied to only a few—
Those who wrote for publication.
—Heinrich Heine, *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* (1844), XXV

"Nobody these days holds the written word in such high esteem as police states do," remarks a character in Italo Calvino's 1979 novel *If on a winter's night a traveler*. "What statistic allows one to identify the nations where literature enjoys true consideration better than the sums appropriated for controlling and suppressing it? Where it is the object of such attentions, literature gains an extraordinary authority, inconceivable in countries where it is allowed to vegetate as an innocuous pastime, without risks."[1] Calvino is certainly not the first writer to suggest that when artists enjoy total freedom of expression they are not being taken seriously. Alfred Döblin, remarking in the 1920s on demands by some in Germany for absolute artistic freedom, maintained that artists and writers were part of society and had a right to be treated like everyone else; allowing them to say whatever they want is to ignore or dismiss them as one would a child or idiot. "Art is not sacred, and artworks should be allowed to be banned," he said; "We [writers] want to be taken seriously. We want to have an impact, and thus we have—a right to be punished."[2]

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As the proverbial land of *Dichter und Denker* (poets and thinkers), Germany in the imperial era (1871–1918) devoted enormous resources to creating, editing, publishing, distributing, marketing, reading, interpreting, and reviewing serious (and not-so-serious) literature. In 1900, for example, the German Empire published nearly twenty-five thousand book and journal titles, with an average run of about one thousand copies each—nearly twice as many titles as published in France, nearly three and a half times as many as in England, and nearly four times as many as in the US. Of these titles, one in nine were classified as "*Schöne Literatur*" (belles lettres), a portion that had risen to one in seven by 1908.[3] With an estimated six hundred theaters, Germans were also heavily invested in producing, staging, directing, rehearsing, and performing drama.[4] At the same time state and local authorities—right up to the final days of World War I—expended much time and money prosecuting and trying writers; supervising, controlling, regulating, and censoring literature and the public stage; and hearing and arbitrating frequent appeals of their censorship decisions. The national Reichstag, several state parliaments, various government commissions, and the press, meanwhile, studied and debated at length the empire's censorship decisions, policies, and laws. And legions of private citizens within and outside of the literary community mobilized and organized to protest the nation's censorship practices and agitate for their change. Although some, like the liberal-left journalist Bernhard Kellermann, believed no country disdained literature and everything spiritual more than did the German Empire,[5] in Germany literature in general—and theater in particular—clearly enjoyed true consideration, was the object of great attention, and commanded an extraordinary authority. Writers there were taken seriously indeed and several were punished for what they wrote. Whether or not imperial Germany would have qualified as a "police state" in Calvino's eyes, it certainly went to great lengths to control and suppress some of its literature and drama. This is a study of how and why that literary censorship occurred and what consequences followed.

Imperial Germany and Modernist Literature

Historians have long argued about the nature of the German Empire, and since the 1960s their conflicting interpretations have often been vehemently debated. Many scholars characterize the *Kaiserreich* as a backward, rigid, pseudoconstitutional, semiabsolutistic and militaristic autocracy—a solidly authoritarian society where a strong interventionist *Obrigkeitsstaat* (a state based on monarchical, authoritarian principles) repressed or restricted civil rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression. Germany's weak, illiberal, and semifeudalized bourgeoisie (these observers argue) was unable to establish the kind of liberal, modern, middle-class political system their British and French counterparts had. Instead, the empire was controlled by a narrow, premodern, antiliberal, reactionary elite of agrarian-military aristocrats and archconservative industrialists who protected

their domination by coercing opponents, manipulating political life and public opinion, and successfully blocking all progressive elements.

This "orthodox" view has been increasingly challenged by revisionists who argue imperial Germany was in many ways as liberal and "normal" as its Western neighbors. According to this school, the German bourgeoisie was actually strong and growing in influence; liberal bourgeois values had triumphed in many areas, and in the political realm had created a genuine *Rechtsstaat* (a state based on a rule of law). In some respects, such as its social security system, universal male suffrage, world-class universities, and exemplary municipal administration, Germany was more advanced than any other nation. New populist movements and ideologies within the lower middle classes were not fostered and manipulated by the elites from above, but rather arose from below through the autonomous political self-mobilization of previously subordinate social groups. After the 1890s, revisionists argue, modernizing and reformist forces in the empire were making headway; German society was becoming more progressive and pluralistic; the liberal public sphere, civil liberties, and freedom of the press were all expanding; and elections were fair and political culture was becoming more democratic. "[D]efenders of the 'people's rights' were clearly more numerous and more powerful than scholars once believed."[6]

Whether one believes traditional, antimodern forces still overpowered those of modernity, or that the latter were prevailing over the former, it is clear imperial Germany was a society in "restless movement" [7] undergoing fundamental and at times overwhelming economic, social, and cultural changes. The rapid shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy, while making Germany Europe's leading industrial power, also brought greater social stratification, class conflict, and industrial strife. A population explosion was accompanied by massive internal and external migration and rapid urbanization. Secularization, the modernization of the school curricula, and greatly expanded access for the middle and lower middle classes (and women) to a university education were altering many worldviews. New forms of mass entertainment, from the popular press and *Schundliteratur* ("trashy" pulp fiction) to the cinema, were rapidly changing popular culture. The growth of Europe's strongest socialist movement and of a middle-class feminist movement, as well as the growing assertiveness of various ethnic and religious minorities, heightened the level of social, religious, cultural, and political conflict. Everywhere traditional norms and values seemed to be colliding with newer, more modern ones.

This was true especially of art, where defenders of the traditional clashed with avant-garde proponents of new styles, techniques, and subject matter. The conventional, idealistic view of art and literature prevalent in imperial Germany was a conservative, backward-looking one that worshipped classical notions of the true, the good, and the beautiful and viewed innovation with profound suspicion. Artistic and literary traditionalists preached adherence to certain eternal, unchanging principles, including order, harmony, regularity, and a disinterested enjoyment of beauty. Rejecting notions of elite aestheticism, traditionalists also believed art

had a social mission—indeed duty—to ennoble and uplift the broader populace, to elevate the spirits of common men and women and inspire them with noble, idealistic sentiments. For art to fulfill its social responsibilities required that artists and writers represent recognizable and potentially inspiring subjects in an intelligible and uplifting way.

No better articulation of this idealist conception of art can be found than in the pronouncements of Emperor Wilhelm II, especially his famous December 1901 speech at the dedication of the Berlin Siegesallee, at which he lectured the assembled sculptors about the nature of true art and the dangers of artistic modernism. Art, Wilhelm II proclaimed, takes its models from nature and God's eternal laws and the artists of classical antiquity expressed most perfectly these eternal, unchanging laws of beauty, harmony, and aesthetics. "[D]espite all our modern feelings and knowledge, we are proud when it is said of a particularly fine artistic achievement: 'that is nearly as good as the art of 1900 years ago.' But only nearly!" Warning against the corruption of pure art by "so-called modern tendencies," the emperor implored German artists not to be led astray by passing fads or to abandon the principles on which art is built. "*An art that transgresses the laws and limits I have outlined ceases to be art,"* he proclaimed. Artists who march behind the seductive banner of "freedom" frequently fall into unbounded license and overweening presumption. For Wilhelm II, "Whoever strays from the law of Beauty and from the feeling for the aesthetic and harmonious … sins against the fountainhead of art."

Finally, Wilhelm II expounded on art's social mission: art should help educate the nation:

> [Art] should make it possible even for the lower classes, after their toil and hard work, to lift themselves up and be inspired by ideals, … to elevate themselves to the beautiful and rise above the constraints of their everyday thoughts. But when art, as so often happens today, shows us only misery and shows it even uglier than misery is anyway, then art sins against the German people. … [Art must] hold out its hand to *raise people up, instead of descending into the gutter.*[8]

The emperor's notion that art should elevate and show only the beautiful reflected and reinforced attitudes widely held in imperial Germany. His conservative conception of art also became the semiofficial one because his opinions—and many of his stock platitudes on the subject—were in turn dutifully repeated in the reports of the empire's censors, the arguments of its public prosecutors, and the verdicts of its judges. Whether this was done out of genuine conviction or out of a desire to avoid the kind of royal reprimand given to a few of their more liberal-minded colleagues is largely irrelevant; contemporary observers were convinced that had Wilhelm II taken a less-hostile stance toward modern German drama, "then surely many actions by the censorship authorities—who have proven to be genuine enemies of art, shackles on the mighty, rushing development of our artistic life—would not have taken place."[9]

This conservative artistic idealism stood in sharp, even irreconcilable conflict with modern artists' conception of the function of their art and their relation to

society. Like their counterparts elsewhere, avant-garde German artists and writers rejected traditional aesthetic norms, repudiating the classical conception of art in which some timeless beauty was the revered touchstone and artists strove for the ennoblement and uplift of the human spirit. For modernist writers especially, truth now became the central axiom of art and the artist's task was to make art conform to real life. Rather than glossing over unpleasant realities or attempting to beautify and idealize what was base or unattractive in life, mid-nineteenth-century German Realists (and the Naturalists who soon followed them) believed that truth in art demanded the acknowledgement and examination of the negative as well as the positive in nature. Using scientific observation and objective analysis in order to portray and reproduce reality as exactly and naturalistically as possible, they hoped finally to lay bare the raw, naked truths about modern society and human existence. Moreover, beginning with Naturalism, and becoming ever more pronounced in the avant-garde movements that followed it, modernist artists proclaimed the autonomy of art and the absolute independence of the artist. In fin de siècle Germany, as elsewhere, many modernist artists and writers embraced a vaguely anarchistic, extremely subjectivist cult of elite aestheticism and commitment to "art for art's sake" that emphasized the creative artists' spiritual and intellectual superiority over ordinary people and insisted on their immunity from normal social conventions and obligations.

As the remarks of Wilhelm II illustrate, these new conceptions of art met with strong resistance from wide segments of the general public as well as from state officials. Imperial authorities, for example, confiscated the work of some writers and artists, prosecuted others for violating the laws against obscenity, blasphemy, or lèse majesté, and police in most cities regularly prohibited the performance of certain dramas. Accordingly, some historians have argued that modernist writers, at least in the short term, were "effectively bridled and isolated" by legal and administrative controls; that legal penalties exerted an effective "restraining influence on writers" by "punishing or preventing the expression in literature of facts or opinions that demanded expression"; or that writers, satirists, and other cultural figures in Wilhelmine Germany existed in some "no-man's land between repression and liberality."[10] Others maintain that "ideas flowed freely" and the empire's "arts and literature were flourishing"; pointing to the "great latitudes of freedom and protection" artists and writers enjoyed, they argue the state's efforts at literary censorship were "largely ineffectual" and "official attempts to exert influence on the theater repertoire and on modern literature came to naught."[11] A leading textbook on twentieth-century European history flatly declares individual rights in the empire were carefully protected and "[t]here was no censorship."[12]

To determine what role formal state controls did in fact play in the literary and political life of imperial Germany, this book examines the laws, institutions, personnel, and everyday practices of literary censorship at both the central/national and the local/regional level. Taking a comparative perspective—noting where the empire's literary censorship resembled and where it differed from that of other

European nations—it can also shed light on the issue of Germany's relative "backwardness" or "normalcy," particularly in its response to modernist literature.

Censorship

The study of censorship is an interdisciplinary field where political, legal, religious, and literary histories intersect with those of the book trade, libraries, the press, theater, and film. Traditionally, studies of censorship have focused on efforts to muzzle particular authors, artists, publications, or ideas, or on the censorship policies and practices of particular regimes or time periods. Since the late 1960s, however, "censorship studies" has expanded considerably and now flourishes as never before. Seminal systematic analyses by Ulla Otto, Hans Fügen, Dieter Breuer, Klaus Kanzog, Annabel Patterson, Reinhard Aulich, and others have explored the theoretical, historical, sociopolitical, and literary dimensions of censorship as a concept and as an institution.[13] Other scholars (including Annette Kuhn, Sue Curry Jansen, Richard Burt, Michael Holmquist, Michael Levine, Robert Post, and Beate Müller), drawing on new insights from literary, communication, and media theory; on a growing interest in the external determinants and social dimensions of literary life broadly defined; and on theories about the evolution of the public sphere (*Öffentlichkeit*), have turned from the study of explicit acts of "repressive intervention" by identifiable regulatory authorities to more latent, generalized structural processes of communications control and cultural regulation. These newer approaches see censorship not as a series of discrete acts by specific institutions and external agents to silence a subject, but rather as an ongoing process or system of power relationships between a variety of censorious forces and agents that transcend time and place. Censorship is omnipresent and inescapable, an inherent structural necessity, they argue, because *all* expression is constrained by underlying psychic and social forces, internalized perceptions and inhibitions, diverse and dispersed techniques of domination, and by discursive practices of exclusion, selection, differentiation, or demarcation.[14] The vast reach of contemporary censorship research is reflected in the recent four-volume *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia,* which defines censorship as any process, "formal and informal, overt and covert, conscious and unconscious, by which restrictions are imposed on the collection, display, dissemination, and exchange of information, opinions, ideas, and imaginative expression." Its entries range from the areas of ethics, law, languages, media studies, and philosophy to politics, psychology, the physical sciences, religion, and sociology.[15]

As censorship studies have expanded, however, the term has been so broadly applied that scholars no longer agree on what censorship is. When the term is used so freely that it includes any attempt by any group or individual, public or private, to "control communication between people" (Berger) or anything, including free market forces, that limits what we can read, hear, or know (Jansen), or

any "discourse control" or "use of semantic domination" (Kienzle and Mende)—including the use of professional or expert language (Schauer)[16]—then the term is virtually devoid of meaning. As Peter Dittmar observed even before the field's postmodern turn: "The inflation of the word 'censorship' into a meaningless term of vilification [*Allerweltschimpfwort*] has become irreversible. Since 'censorship' has come to serve as an excuse for every rebuff that can befall an author, including those that are self-inflicted, that word can hardly be used rationally any more."[17]

In this study, the term *censorship* will be used in its narrower conventional sense, for acts of "repressive intervention": those formal, overt, and conscious attempts to control the public expression of opinions. It is an institutionalized, usually legally sanctioned form of social control involving systematic state examination and judgment of expressions intended for public dissemination. Preventive or prior censorship (*Vorzensur)* occurs when authorized agents of the state claim the prerogative of inspecting expressions and either approving or prohibiting them (or approving them provided they are altered) before they are publicly disseminated. Since expressions cannot legally circulate publicly until they receive explicit official permission, this is the most rigorous form of censorship, for it theoretically bans everything except what the censors approve. Punitive, repressive, or ex post facto censorship (*Nachzensur*), by contrast, controls expressions and imposes sanctions only after the expressions have been made public, for example by confiscating, prohibiting, destroying, or mandating the alteration of the offending material and/or by punishing those responsible for the expression or for its public dissemination. Since under punitive censorship materials may presumably circulate freely before a decision is made to permit or ban them, this is a more permissive form of censorship in that all public expressions are tolerated until they are expressly banned. In imperial Germany most theatrical performances were subject to preventive censorship, while printed literature had to contend only with punitive censorship.

Though I approach censorship from a conventional perspective, I hope to avoid some shortcomings of traditional (and contemporary) censorship studies. Like the satirist who characterized it as "the younger of two sisters, the older of whom is Inquisition,"[18] those who live from the expression and open exchange of ideas and opinions detest censorship. Artists, scholars, writers, and other people of letters decry censorship as a crude weapon wielded by the forces of ignorance to silence courageous heralds of truth and progress. One of its pioneering historians deemed the struggle of literature against censorship "the eternal conflict of two world views, the struggle of light against darkness, of enlightenment against obscurantism," while a recent scholar observes "it has become all but impossible to discuss censorship in anything other than pejorative terms."[19] Literary scholar Dieter Breuer notes that many studies of repressive interventions by censors become simplistic "censorship polemics" that reduce the story to a Manichean collision between rigid petty functionaries and unyielding evangelists of freedom. Censors and authors, he points out, actually have considerable latitude in deciding how best to exercise their respective prerogatives: the former to assert the state's

need for security in the interest of the common good, the latter to stake out and maintain some free space for the individual.[20] Rather than a one-dimensional harangue, this study offers instead a nuanced examination of the motives, practices, limits, and consequences of state censorship of literature in Germany. Such an analysis demands that we look both at the censored and the censors, taking the latter seriously and seeking to understand the complexity of their motives and situation, and it requires us to consider the frequent gap between the intent and the effect of literary censorship. And although focusing on traditional institutional forms of state censorship rather than on broader impersonal processes of cultural regulation and discourse control, I draw on insights from recent literary and social theory (especially reader-response and reception theory and the social control of deviance) to explore some structural features of censorship—without, I hope, succumbing to the tendency of many such analyses to conflate or ignore the significantly different kinds of experiences of those who are subject to censorship.[21]

One such feature that has intrigued many recent scholars is the inclination of the subjects of censorship to internalize the mechanisms of control. Michael Foucault brilliantly analyzed the implicit systems of power and the constraining mechanisms embedded in modern social institutions (for example, prisons, factories, hospitals, or schools) that serve to discipline, control, and determine our behavior without our knowing it.[22] Drawing on his work, many modern studies emphasize how writers and artists are conditioned by constant, omnipresent scrutiny and surveillance to exercise a self-discipline and self-control that makes overt censorship unnecessary. Anxiously anticipating the censor's judgment and hoping to avoid a conflict with the law, some authors may become hesitant or uncertain and may come to practice, either consciously or unconsciously, an inhibiting self-censorship—to write with what one observer has cleverly called a "scissors in the head."[23] Leo Tolstoy, for example, remarked that the "horrible czarist censorship question" always tormented him and caused him involuntarily to abandon many projects he wanted to write; Diderot noted that censorship instills in writers a reticence, uncertainty, and self-doubt so that in the end an author himself no longer knows what he thinks; and John Galsworthy, testifying before a parliamentary committee in 1909 about Britain's theater censorship, quoted letters from many authors who claimed, because of the censor, to have been deterred from writing about something.[24] Censorship can thus ultimately create and sustain a power relationship semi-independent of the censors who exercise it: authors and artists caught up in this power situation can themselves become its bearers. Perhaps, as some observers suggest, censorship actually aims at "the internalization of the claims of domination": regimes seek "to build the secret police into the individual's brain itself and have it assume the position of censor within him," so that the result of successful censorship is ultimately self-censorship. As the French poet and essayist Paul Valery lamented, "In every way we are circumscribed, dominated by a hidden or obvious regimentation extending to everything, and we are so bewildered by this chaos of stimuli obsessing us

that we end by needing it."[25] In examining the experiences of censored German authors, I will look closely at the various ways they responded to, sometimes internalized, and occasionally ended up "needing" censorship.

Even when narrowly defined as formal, overt, and conscious intervention by state authorities, censorship exerts a potent effect upon authors. Whether or not internalized self-censorship actually determines how or what authors think or write privately, it is clear censorship can profoundly influence what they produce for the public, including what subjects they choose and what genres and language they use**.** Censorship affects if and how their work is disseminated to a wider public and which groups or individuals have access to it. Censorship can have significant personal and financial consequences not only for writers and playwrights but also for the publishers, editors, and booksellers who help distribute their works or the theater owners, directors, and actors who stage them. Finally, censorship can influence how the public reads or understands an author's work or how theatergoers and dramatic critics respond to it. Censorship, in short, must be considered as a constitutive factor of literary life. And so it was in imperial Germany, where official efforts to censor literature and drama had a significant impact on the literary life of the period: as the writer Herbert Ihering observed, until censorship was abolished in November 1918, German police regulations were "an aesthetic principle" that shaped the language and themes of literature and the theater.[26]

In Germany, as elsewhere, state censorship was a form of social control employed by governing authorities to defend and secure conformity to the shared political, social, religious, and moral norms and values that, in their view, were essential for communal integration, social cohesion, and civic order. While all sociopolitical systems guard their norms and many use censorship to do so, censors must nevertheless permit some modification and adaptation of those norms over time. For norms are historically relative, not eternally fixed: as new existential circumstances emerge in a society, as conditions governing communal interaction and the satisfaction of basic human needs change and evolve, the norms on which the society's identity, cohesion, and stability depend must also change and evolve. New situations demand new norms; no social order will remain stable unless it adapts to changing circumstances and no code of norms will remain viable unless it, too, evolves to meet the changing conditions of social life. A continual dialectical tension thus exists between society's need to defend and uphold its norms on the one hand, and its need to adapt or creatively reformulate its norms to changing circumstances on the other.

Censorship plays a central role in this larger process of the evolution or reformulation of norms (*Normenwandel*). Any viable social order has—indeed, must have—people, institutions, and processes that promote the evolution and modernization of its norms: by questioning, challenging, and deviating from established norms and by exposing reigning conventions as outmoded, indefensible, or no longer tenable, they encourage the development of new values better suited to the social needs created by new circumstances. As one authority on social

norms has observed, "All social change commences as deviant behavior."[27] Since the function of the censor is to uphold existing norms by suppressing public expressions that endanger or subvert them, an inevitable, perpetual conflict exists between the norm-preserving efforts of censors and the efforts of those, especially imaginative writers and artists, who promote norm evolution and adaptation. Confrontations between censors and writers are part of the larger, ongoing process of norm-conflict and norm-evolution that occurs in all societies and in all historical periods.[28]

The decisions of censors are clearly an important factor influencing the rate at which norms will evolve. The more rigidly censors interpret and defend existing norms and the more intolerant they are of deviations from reigning standards, the more norm evolution will be retarded; the more flexible and tolerant they are of expressions that depart from the traditional, the easier the process of norm adaptation and evolution will be. Censors who perform their function too well—that is, those who suppress *all* nonconformist expressions and thus block any change in the reigning code of norms—actually pose a threat to a society's long-term stability, especially in periods of rapid social transformation such as imperial Germany was experiencing. For when members of a community begin questioning or dissenting from traditional norms, it usually indicates prevailing norms have not adapted to changing social conditions. Nonconformist expressions, especially of a literary nature, are frequently symptoms of deeper social transformations taking place or that have already occurred. Unless these new underlying circumstances, needs, or problems are recognized and the society's norms are allowed to evolve to meet them, those norms will become unviable and will no longer provide a source of social integration, cohesion, and stability.

If seen simply as a means of preserving a social or political system's indispensable code of norms, censorship seems a justifiable and even beneficial social institution. But it also has a profoundly ideological dimension, both in the stricter sense of reflecting the interests of a particular class, and in the broader sense of being intimately involved with the dynamics of power and domination. Political sociologists and others have persuasively argued that all censorship is simply a method used by politically dominant elites to defend their interests and preserve their sociopolitical dominance by protecting and upholding the code of values on which that dominance is based.[29]

Self-protection, to be sure, is hardly how censoring authorities conceive of or characterize their actions. Those who exercise censorship or support its use have traditionally claimed they do so for the welfare and protection of others. Censorship is necessary, they maintain, to defend society's weaker, more susceptible, and more easily misled elements: women; the young; the less-educated, naïve, or susceptible readers or theater-goers; certain religious or ethnic groups; a particular social class—the list is extensive. Such justifications for censorship are based on two paternalistic-authoritarian assumptions: first, that some (or most) people, being weak and corruptible, can be saved from evil only by strict rules imposed by external authority; and second, that some social elements, because of

their immaturity, inferiority, or some peculiar corruptibility, are not competent to defend themselves against harmful ideas or influences and are thus in need of the censor's tutelage. ("Censorship is guardianship," observed the Hungarian-German writer Ödön von Horváth; "for guardianship, one needs police; for police, one needs the penitentiary."[30]) As guardians or wardens for others, censors of course assume they and a circle of colleagues are safely immune to the moral dangers and corrupting influence of the materials they examine in order to declare them harmful to someone else. The "unsafe," vulnerable audiences they usually identify are people with no power to answer back: young, uneducated, or politically impotent groups that must accept the status of being unable to make their own decisions.[31]

Censorship, in other words, protects not society's most defenseless and least powerful members but its most secure, influential, and dominant ones. The prevailing system of values and social norms censors uphold and defend are defined by and serve the interests of that society's most powerful, dominant groups. Attempts to censor public expressions that conflict with, challenge, or violate established norms are, quite simply, attempts to defend and preserve the status quo, the system of relationships, attitudes, and conditions on which the primacy of the dominant elite rests. The institution of censorship, one early analyst observed, existed primarily to defend the established order against dissidents and critics. The most enthusiastic advocates of censorship are defenders of the status quo, those who feel most in harmony with and depend most upon established institutions and values and whose interests would be most harmed if these were radically altered. By contrast, it is those least attached to the status quo—maladjusted outsiders, the underprivileged, radicals, and heretics—who, because of their susceptibility to dangerous notions, are regarded as the greatest threat to the established order. Precisely these groups, because they cannot be trusted with dangerous ideas, are the real targets of censorship; in "protecting" these social outsiders from contact with certain "dangerous" expressions, censors are ultimately protecting the existing social order. As Goethe noted: "The powerful demand and exercise censorship, the underlings want freedom of the press. The former want neither their plans nor activities obstructed by a cheeky, contrary force, rather they want to be obeyed; the latter want to express their reasons in order to legitimize their disobedience."[32]

Despite their protestations to the contrary then, censoring authorities use censorship to defend not the weak and vulnerable but rather the strong and powerful. By suppressing challenges to the reigning code of norms—a code that is defined by and serves the interests of the dominant social group—from dissidents, critics, and opponents of the status quo, censorship is a coercive political weapon used to preserve the established sociopolitical order and the dominant elite's primacy within it. From the standpoint of political sociology, the history of censorship is "the history of the struggle for power of dissident groups against the existing interests in politics, religion, and morality, and the banned book is

often only a symbol for a more comprehensive struggle over authority." What is at stake in this struggle is consensus over a system of norms and social rules that promote conformity beneficial to those in authority.[33] As one influential censorship scholar notes, all censorship (whether narrowly or broadly defined) is inextricably linked to the control of power and knowledge: it is "a mechanism for gathering intelligence that the powerful can use to tighten control over people or ideas that threaten to disrupt established systems of order" and "a strategy used by the powerful to deny the powerless access to power-knowledge."[34]

Interpreting censorship as an instrument of elite or class domination reveals and explains much about its motives, functions, and consequences in imperial Germany, but such an approach is not without its problems. In practice, the sorts of expressions censors attempt to suppress (and the severity of their coercive sanctions) vary greatly. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century this was true not only among different nations with similar social norms, sociopolitical systems, and ruling elites, but also, as we shall see in Germany, among different regions or cities within the same nation. Moreover, different members of the "dominant elite" and different branches of the state apparatus, even at the local level, often disagreed vehemently over whether a particular expression should be prohibited. Identifying a coherent national or local ruling elite, its interests, and a particular code of norms crucial to its social and political power, whether in Germany or elsewhere, can be a dubious undertaking. The picture is further complicated by the fact that conservative segments of the broader German populace frequently pressured governing authorities to censor or prohibit things the latter would have preferred to ignore or tolerate.

As with many human institutions, censorship often produces ironic outcomes that are contrary to, even in mockery of, the intended, expected, or appropriate results. This study will show how in imperial Germany an array of important restraints to state power thwarted the efficient exercise of censorship and made it highly unpredictable. While efforts to censor literature proved effective in some settings, it also had consequences quite different from what the imperial authorities intended.

Notes

1. Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night a traveler,* trans. William Weaver (San Diego and New York, 1981), 234–35.
2. Quoted in Peter Jelavich, "Paradoxes of Censorship in Modern Germany," in *Enlightenment, Passion, Modernity. Historical Essays in European Thought and Culture,* ed. Mark S. Micale and Robert L. Dietle (Stanford, 2000), 277–78. See also Michael Knoche, "Einführung in das Thema," in *Der Zensur zum Trotz. Das gefesselte Wort und die Freiheit Europa,* ed. Paul Raabe (Wolfenbüttel, 1991), 23–39.

3. Hans Widman, *Geschichte des Buchhandels. Vom Altertum bis zur Gegenwart,* rev. ed. (Wiesbaden, 1975), 154; Ernst Umlauff, "Zur Struktur der europäischen Kulturwirtschaft. Der deutsche Buchhandel bis 1930," *Europa-Archiv* 2 (Sept. 1947): 891–93.
4. One leading authority estimated in 1896 there were approximately six hundred theaters in Germany. (Adolph L'Arronge, *Deutsches Theater und deutsche Schauspielkunst* [Berlin, 1896], 24); another estimate on the eve of the war claimed over 460 (Eugen Schöndienst, *Geschichte des deutschen Bühnenvereins. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Theaters 1846–1935* [Frankfurt, 1979], 229).
5. Bernhard Kellermann, "Der Schriftsteller und die deutsche Republik," in *An alle Künstler!* (Berlin, 1919), reprinted in *Weimarer Republik. Manifeste and Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur 1918–1933,* ed. Anton Kaes (Stuttgart, 1983), 30–31.
6. For brief overviews of the historiography of imperial Germany see Roger Chickering, "The Quest for a Usable German Empire," in *Imperial Germany: A Historiographical Companion,* ed. Roger Chickering (Westport, CT, 1996), 1–12 and James Retallack, *Germany in the Age of Kaiser Wilhelm II* (New York, 1996), 1–15 (quote from 42).
7. Volker R. Berghahn, *Imperial Germany, 1871–1914: Economy, Society, Culture and Politics* (Providence, RI and Oxford, 1994), 123.
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