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**Fascinating Censorship:
Mundane Behavior in the Treatment of Banned Material**

By

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"If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear."

George Orwell, "Animal Farm" (unpublished introduction, quoted from: Robertson, 1993, p. xiii)

Preface:

We are socialized by the different kinds of mass media that determine our view of life and influence our behavior. Socio-cultural experiences and associations do condition our opinions and preferences. Moreover every medium is a mirror of society. How tolerant or restrictive we treat this mirror reveals to us a significant part of our current situation in general.

But neither the official picture of the mainstream culture nor the media effect research, that often criticizes the aspects of sex and violence in the media to justify control and censorship, reveal the behavior of people who are fascinated by banned (and often bizarre) contents.

The "normal" taste of ordinary people as well as the members of so-called "advanced civilization" is distinguished from the activities of those who prefer unusual media precisely because of the restrictions. But even this behavior and the banned materials themselves are part of the cultural landscape, although they get rarely into the focus of academic interest, inspite of the fact, that a huge number of theoretical studies were written especially by jurists and social scientists. Unfortunately it would be beyond our scope to ponder the diametrically opposed debates around free speech and censorship. I just want to point out that you may find further informations in the quoted books.

Yet, the ordinary, simple everyday things of life are a valid source of knowledge. The main questions are: What is the quarrel between censorship and free speech up to? How are these deviant products of the media used by which kind of consumers in their everyday lives, and why are these items "media-worthy" for them. And, what point of view do the censors have? What is at stake in banning dubious contents, and what is at stake in allowing the free flow of uncensored media?

My research in the field of the sociology of popular culture conducted in Germany (Seim 1997, Seim/Spiegel (Ed.) 1998³ and 1999) and even this short paper deal with this "twilight zone", a gray area where a strange struggle occurs behind the scenes. To be honest I must say, that I am collecting dubious material by myself. During the preparation of this paper I interviewed

some fans of the weird, read a lot of special fanzines/books and investigated web sites firsthand. So, I concentrated my investigation on the orientations and behavior of the German fans of censored material rather than on the activities of the censors. The main source for those behavior might be the journal "BPjS Aktuell", the official organ of the German bureau for examination of harmful media.

1.) The current Situation of Ambiguity:

"Censorship happens whenever some people succeed in imposing their political or moral values on others by suppressing words, images, or ideas that they find offensive" (Heins, 1993, p. 3). Censorship always has a Janus-face. It creates an odd scenario of ambiguity. On the one side, the government and many pressure groups try to suppress unacceptable media contents within the bounds of human rights and constitutional law regarding freedom of speech, art and press. On the other side forbidden things become rather attractive to many fans because of the specific thrill of the interdiction. Michel Foucault once said, that a ban makes of every book a valuable book.

This two-faced phenomenon of repressive control versus self-determination of mature users raises the questions of how the fans on the one side put into practice their fascination with breaking the taboo and on the other side why and how the censors ban the items they select.

2.) The Censors and their objects:

According to Post (Ed., 1998) censorship can be understand as a kind of cultural regulation. As any other reasonable measure, censorship must try to balance the claims of the common good against the claims of individual freedom. In general, censorship as a mandatory requirement depends on the application of contemporary community standards and conventions; in particular, it is implemented according to the taste and character of individual readers and viewers. But even the censors act on their own subjective taste to prevent feared anti-social attitudes, when they assess the intention and the possible effects of their examination of cultural objects. Even a few objectionable sequences or pages — taken out of the context — could be sufficient to ban the whole film or book, that epitomizes so to speak the bad. But there are at least two sides to everything. One person's obscenity is another person's bedtime reading. Art or morbid filth? Finally, it's a question of

ethics and aesthetics, as to whether one accepts and permits or condemns and banishes crass descriptions of the physical side of the body.

Most intrusive censorship is supported as taking place in the interests of protecting young people. These censors are likely convinced that they are doing a positive service for society. They must believe that no social system — even a pluralistic democracy — can allow their members a total and absolute freedom of informational interchange or they could not do their work.

The degree of freedom, the difficult judgment between prohibition or permissible tolerance are permanently in flux. Even today in the liberated time of a postmodern "anything goes", the government puts the kibosh on the free flow of the kinds of information decision makers feel are harmful to minors or endanger social stability. A lot of laws against literature, films and other media, which are thought to be depraved or corrupt, are currently deemed valid.

Even if there does not exist a major institution of a pre-censorship in Germany, a lot of authorities closely scrutinize the limits of liberty. Only the FSK ("Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft"), the German Board of Film Classification (a more or less voluntary self-regulating body of the motion picture industry like the "MPAA" in the USA), performs a pre-censorship assessment because all movies are required to be submitted before their first showing. Upon review, the FSK confers several ratings up to warning notices such as "Not to be sold to anyone under 18".

Above all, the courts and the so called "Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Schriften und Medieninhalte – BPjS" (a unique federal office of examination that identifies the kind of media material that are likely to corrupt the young) can take action against disapproved items by putting them on its index to prevent minors from coming into contact with contents suspected of being harmful. Special committees with three or 12 mostly honorary members of social relevant interest groups as churches, youth welfare organizations, teaching staff, publishers and distributors, decide if an item is to put on the index. At least these restrictions are in force for the more than 80 millions citizens of Germany. Any individual can institute legal proceedings against dubious media objects at any youth welfare department. About 14,000 videos, books, comics, records, computergames, on-line contents and so on are restricted by being on this index and therefore they are forbidden to minors because of "social-ethic desorientation" or wrong moral concepts by — more or less — explicit obscenity, sex, drugs, violence, occultism, encouragement of suicide, or political extremism. All bans are

mentioned in the lists of the official organ "BPjS Aktuell". It is not allowed to advertise these media objects or to send them by mail. Most of them came from foreign countries, in the area of literature (compare with Ohmer, 2000) for example: Bret Easton Ellis' "American Psycho", William S. Burroughs' "Naked Lunch", Dan Kavanagh's (Julian Barnes) "Duffy", Timothy Leary's "Politics of Ecstasy".

Additionally about 500 books, films, records and so on are totally banned in Germany. Even if Article 5 of the German Constitution establish the freedom of speech ("Eine Zensur findet nicht statt", means: Censorship does not occur), a lot of criminal and civil laws limit the possibilities of free expression. The reasons for prohibition are varied, such as: Hard core pornography under § 184 Criminal Code (about 175 objects banned), glorification of violence under § 131 (about 170 objects banned), libel or hate speech under § 130 (about 100 objects banned, especially Nazi propaganda and the so called "Auschwitz lie"). Every judge can make his own decision what is to be banned nationwide for "antisocial harmfulness" (in German: "sozialschädlich"). But every isolated case is a matter of interpretation.

The main ground for book banning in Germany is Nazi propaganda (compare with Post (Ed.), 1998, pp. 67-87), and I think this exception to the right to freedom of speech might be reasonable: More than hundred publications and records are forbidden for xenophobic incitement, hate speech, right-wing extremism, race hatred, revanchistic theories of a Jewish conspiracy, or because they questioned the Holocaust or German war guilt.

But even manuals for self-defense like many books from the US publishers "Paladin Press" and "Loompanics Unlimited" were seized by Canadian and German authorities: "Get tough! How to win in hand-to-hand fighting" (by Cpt. Fairbairn, Paladin Press, Boulder, Colorado) or "The poisoner's handbook" (by Maxwell Hutchkinson, Loompanics, Port Townsend, Washington 1988), although they were "sold for informational purposes only". In the USA they were freely available because of the First Amendment; in Germany, they are banned since 1991 because of instructions on how to commit criminal offenses.

But it's questionable to ban virtual reality artworks or the artificial fantasy world of the movies, literature and comics. Concerning motion pictures, the violation of human dignity because of graphic violence is the main reason for prohibition: For example the following films are proscribed in Germany: "The Evil Dead" (director: Sam Raimi: This film is banned in Germany since 1984.

The censors passed this film only in a cut version R-rated), "Halloween Part 2" (produced by John Carpenter), "Phantasm" (Don Coscarelli) and "Braindead" (Peter Jackson). Some confiscated records are: "Butchered at Birth" (by the death metal band Cannibal Corpse) because of violent cover artwork, and "Eating Lamb" (by the US-Punk-Band NOFX, 1996) because of the shown sexual intercourse with an animal. The band issued two different versions of cover art. The LP version "Eating Lamb" was banned in Germany in 1996 because of "bestiality" ("sodomistic porn"), the similar illustrated CD "Heavy Petting Zoo" not. Another example for different cover version is "Bloodthirst" by "Cannibal Corpse" (Metal Blade Records, Germany 1999). To prevent further bans the label created two issues – one original artwork and one softened for the German market to appease the morality guardians and, respectively, the watchdogs. But, Pieper (Ed., 1999) shows, that the restriction even of music is a world wide problem.

3.) The Fans:

The "aficionado's" right to get what they want is wider than the maker's right to spread his ideas, because the laws (and the risks) have always been aimed primarily at directors, authors, publishers or editors. In other words – the law does not forbid consumers in the most cases to read banned books or to watch banned films (except child porn, which possession alone is criminal) if you find and own one, but every sale and trade is prohibited so these items could be confiscated and the producers or distributors punished.

Violent media contents and a latent sexualization seem to become quite normal. People are exposed to a casual constant stream of more or less questionable items. Cable networks, videotapes, computer games, and the Internet offer the possibility to gain everything you want. Anonymosity ("Pretty good Privacy") and encryption technology ("FreeNet") could neutralize the ability to wiretap, to censor. In this confusing area an index is — unintentional in the eyes of the government — a point of reference helping some fascinated individuals to pick out the probably most exciting offers. Reading an index is like looking into an area that the controlling moralizers take for the blackest depths of the human soul and the underground of society. Already the disreputable circumstances and the feeling of doing something forbidden might be thrilling. The motivation for getting banned stuff may vary, but like a "Pavlovian Reflex" every authoritarian restriction on the publication and

distribution of suspicious material inflames the desire among the fandom to know what one shouldn't know.

The mainstream with its social control of good taste, taboos and the speech code becomes predictable and boring to the connoisseurs of the really thrilling stuff of unfiltered independent gore watching, so they set out on the search for the suppressed. Banned films, books, comics, records and so on attract the buffs strongly to test the limits and to explore the dark side. They seem to have high hopes of finding something very special. Most of these fans may come from the middle-class, are young and male. Some statistics try to verify that most of the fans who are fascinated by these films tend to have lower education attainments. Serious researchers as Vogelgesang (1990, pp. 171f, 221f) does this in his analysis of juvenile peer groups that stick together for horror film watching sessions demonstrating nevertheless that the elaborated codes of knowledge in film aesthetics and special effects reflect a sophisticated interchange and involved behavioral style. He summarizes that taste and habitus are not class-specific but oriented to specific scenes of like-minded individuals. As far as I know a study that examines the ethnographic details of the fandom of banned media does not exist. Only a few data are known.

"Adults, particularly college educated males in their thirties or forties with above average social-economic status, are the dominant users of sex oriented materials" (Larsen, 1994, p. 93). The notion of resistance is to be independent from official orders, rules and regulations concerning the matter of taste. But even if a slight fascination with the taboo is a wide-spread attitude especially in the adolescent unconformist stratum or peer group – oppose actively the norm is seldom. Only in the relatively anonymous Internet you can find a lot of sites and chats concerning the freedom of speech where people fights against suppression in publishing about the bad state of affairs. I guess only a few thousands of fans demand and collect banned material systematically. But if a case of dubious oppression occurs, the public debate of principle around free speech and human rights is vivid for a short time in the feature pages, although the most of those writers actually did not have seen or read banned material.

Beside the superstructure of the official opinion of political correctness and judicial bans, which mainly are approved by the "moral majority", there are a lot of sub-cultural scenes where groups try to reverse the authorities and their blockage strategies. It seems that successful circumvention of bans by gamesman-like ploys is driven by a sense of a sporting challenge and produces within the fans a feeling of gloating ("Schadenfreude"). As an

"experimentum libertatis", a standpoint opposed to omnipresent restrictive laws is frequently supported by members of youth-cultures. Some minors, for example, ask their elder siblings or friends to get adults-only films or other media. This subversive system of distribution, lending, copying and swapping is delimited and works rather independently from the adult world. Only insiders are admitted to this autonomous sub-area. Banned items become a kind of vehicle of oppositional meaning. Especially, friends of splatter, gore and other "violent" artworks are connected in a special kind of provocative fandom that sustains their hobby. A lot of those consumers are used to collecting the results of their observations and interchange new information about banning, cuts and so on in chat rooms, fanzines, or e-mail newsletters.

Especially the Internet has become a particular and seductive marketplace even for strange ideas. In Germany the state criticizes that for example "Napster" could be misused as a barter platform for illegal violent skinhead- or Nazi music. E-commerce bookshops also offer forbidden right-wing literature like Hitlers "Mein Kampf" for sale. The Government means, that the cyberspace shall not be a lawless sphere. "Yahoo", for instance, blocks in several countries the access of web sites which offers Nazi "devotional objects". But, as the ITAA (Information Technology Association of America) says 1995 in its statement "Internet, Free Speech and Industry Self-Regulation" (www.ita.org/intrpt01.htm): "Technology itself has no value system or point of view; rather, it is the behavior of users which determines the purposes served by the particular technology in case of the Internet, the deviant behavior of a small minority has created fear in the public's mind about this new technology and, as a result, attracted the attention of lawmakers at both the federal and state levels."

In Germany many lovers of "deviant" profane media are of the opinion that the state is making up their minds for them. Less the viewers of pornography but more the "gore-hounds" are fond of interchanging the results of their observation.

According to Cynthia M. King the gore watchers are attracted to graphic horror with blood, death, and physical torture. They think these scenes with the "really ill shit", that the film classification board usually deletes to grant an "imprimatur", are cool. To avoid this heteronomous lack of information, for instance those sequences the censor cuts off, several US fan publications (so called "fanzines") like "Fangoria", "Filmthreat" or "Gorezone" and German zines like "Splattering Image", "Doom" or "Gory News" (www.gorynews.de) and

Websites like "www.schnittberichte.de", "www.filmzensur.de" or "www.indizierte-filme.de" satisfy one's curiosity by telling about the results of video bashing and the current intrusions of censorship in motion pictures and TV. Special dictionaries by the authors Trebbin (1998) or Bertler+Lieber (1999) are listing most of the available and banned film. The publishers obviously have a need to express their degree of freedom. They compare for instance the unabridged original versions with the cut versions for the local market and show some restricted stills. For similar reasons, other insider fan groups enjoy cracking the check codings of toned down computergames to resurrect the original version.

Barred objects become rather fascinating to many collectors of the weird, who want to know what the State suppresses. For those inquisitive persons every ban is a cue (signal) and every index has bold as brass the function of an interesting shopping list with the special thrill of the taboo to taste the forbidden fruit. This different kind of adventure/sensation seeking of the fandom has its own conventions with a certain magic of exceptionality. It's astonishing that — except for some right-wing scenes of skinhead music — almost the only horror films that produced a vibrant fandom in which the members interchange their experiences are those with obliterated scenes, different versions and bans. As far I consider, you can't find similar interactions in other "forbidden zones" like pornography, perhaps because those films do not attach importance to originality. In comparison with observing horror films as a test of courage or as an initiation rite, porn watching might be more of a lonesome event that probably needs no embarrassing informational interchange on different versions or so.

It may increase one's own experience and the group status to find a special prohibited and therefore hard to get rarity with a high "market value". The manner of obtaining such material is "style forming". In negating the act of banning, alternative ways of procuring materials along with several strategies of circumventing the bans have emerged: for example, re-issues of seized media under false names, pirated edition and bootlegging on the black market, mail-order lists with cover named films, import of foreign versions, or publication of documentaries and fanzines with suppressed details. More open minded and liberal countries like the Netherlands or Belgium, where nearly no media censorship exist, became very interesting for the fans. Shops like "Cult Video" (Amsterdam) sell most of the banned tapes in the original unabridged version. German shops such as "Videodrom" or "Incredibly Strange Video"

(both in Berlin) import foreign versions with harmless titles. While bootlegging is illegal and benefits only the profit of the traders in these bad copies, the re-issue of forbidden films under false fantasy names can work for some time. The "Astro" label obtained the copyright for several "cult classics" because in Germany banned films such as "Maniac" (William Lustig), "Last House on the Left" (Wes Craven) or "Mother's Day" (Charles Kaufman) were re-issued in digitally remastered and completely uncut versions. This confused the government for a while and ruined the prices for the original cassettes, but brought the suppressed and formally out of print material back to availability, until the police in a concerted swoop in many shops seized and charged many titles with being illegal. Since spring 2000 several judges in Berlin blacklisted these "new" editions because they have the same condemned contents. But I would guess that it's impossible to eradicate a film if some copies survive.

Prohibition demands obedience, not understanding. Censorship demonstrates the power of the rulers, and in the outlook of the fans deprives them of their free own will which has resulted in resistance. Those consumers choose their own program by circumventing the official instructions.

4.) Conclusion:

"Every taboo deals with an awakening to the dilemma of curiosity about something both attractive and dangerous", Roger Shattuck (1996, p. 30) wrote in his book "Forbidden Knowledge". Similarly, the everyday struggle of censors and fans is intriguing but little is known regarding this phenomenon.

We have found a complex situation among certain interest groups that some people may identify as an aberration from the normal use of the media, although the provocative topic of "eros and thanatos" is as old as culture itself. But ethics, moral reasoning and society are permanent developing between freedom and responsibility. We have found a current view of "how divided and diverse societies decide what is permissible to broadcast" (Shaw, 1999). Some independent filmmakers try to create a special symbolic code by using exaggerated graphic violence to describe the horror in everyday situations where the extreme becomes quite normal. Disturbing nihilistic films like "Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer" (John McNaughton), "Nekromantik" (Jörg Buttgerit) or "Combat Shock" (Buddy Giovinazzo) show the ambivalent mundanity of ordinary madness and abnormality in a depressing way. B-pictures can be made

cheaply with no-name stars as long as they can keep an audience's attention (Balun, 1989, p. 173) especially by exploiting taboos.

Censors won't tolerate that. Media rating or banning of the so-called "video nasties" or "mindraping" comics are mundane for the involved censors. The main part of society is unaware that these media even exist. It's no big business to cut or prohibit those special interest and "no-budget" films, books and so on, if the majority agrees or do not care about them — in their opinion — disgusting sleazy items. The examiners of the diverse governmental offices feel that they are just doing their well-paid jobs in the name of public mental hygiene. They often demonstrate a lack of a sense of humor regarding matters of taste, decency and hallowed icons. Most censors do not recognize that their work depends on the variable phenomenon of "Zeitgeist", the shifting of boundaries, and the changing of values. As Greene (Ed., 2000) verifies, they just find new code words to hide their true notions.

On the other side are the inquisitive fans who feel compelled to avoid the restrictions. In their opinion censorship is an obsolete and undemocratic instrument of control. But censorship creates as well sub-cultural fandoms of people who try to negate the amazing strange fact that even adults were not allowed to get many X-certificated films, books and records, at least not uncut.

Of course, some regulating curbs are necessary, especially on media contents that might be "clear and present" dangerous. The right of free expression, however, can clash with human dignity. But these fans do not touch the borderline that threatens the freedom and well-being of others. They create their very own hobby and just claim tolerance. And for the most part they are only looking for X-rated artworks and do not commit crimes by copying the slashers. Even repulsive splatter or explicit porn movies can be interpreted as patterned evasions of a catharsis. The social existence is not obstructed in the most cases. And by the way – none of the "normal" viewers is forced to watch them. You may ask, what is at stake in banning those filthy material? Well, who can decide for future generations which kind of media content is unworthy to survive? One characteristic of censorship is the inconspicuous extension of its sphere of influence. The consequence could be, that a few judges decide what we are allowed to receive. But the voices of the silenced and the unrepresented still need to be heard, particularly they are rarely found in the mainstream media. Cultural history shows, that formerly banned things gives us a much more clear impression of the everyday thinking and acting of the

common people than high culture and superior art, which reach only a small part of them.

I think, to enlarge the media competence/literacy and the power of discernment of both the fans and the censors, an emancipatory practice might be a better way to master the problems posed by deviant, disturbing or dangerous contents. A reasonable use of control and regulation (bans for instance in the cases of child porn or hateful, aggressive Nazi propaganda; restrictions of violent and explicit material in the name of the protection of young people) is ok in my view, but most of the other prohibitions are not emancipatory, and by the way – they won't work. To blame media for social ills (for example the massacre at Littleton Highschool) and to demand restrictions is the easiest way. Of course, people's behavior and social interactions with others are not only regulated through laws. A lot of social norms and everyday practices facilitate the social life of man. Censorship is not the only but the most simple and discernible trial to instill and regulate norms by official actions. But often they have the opposite effect. Interhuman kinds of social control are more sensible if the near associated field works.

"The threat of censorship is real. Laws can also be counterproductive. For some, they may only serve as labels to heighten curiosity" (Larsen, 1994, p. 95). If bans were removed, novelty would wear off, and satiation would sets in for the most part. In allowing the free flow of uncensored material the mentioned fandom of the bizarre would probably be destroyed, cause there is a symbiotic relationship between censors and fans of the banned. A postmodern scenario of an overstimulation with completely uncensored sex and violence media contents is not desirable. Mysteries are exciting. Showing everything to everybody could not only be quite dangerous for the continued existance of society (as the censors fear), but it would be rather boring for all the trash seeking "truffle-pigs".

References: An annotated bibliography of mentioned books (further relevant books may be found in my books):

- Balun, Chas. (Ed.): The Deep Red Horror Handbook, Fantaco Enterprises, Inc., New York 1989.

The well-known horror film specialist gives insider views of the scene and presents some "famous" splatter film directors. His "gore scoreboard" contains a lot of reviews of more or less bizarre movies.

- Bertler, Andreas & Lieber, Harry: Hölle auf Erden Kompendium 2000, Bertler+Lieber Verlag, München 1999 (Munich/Germany).

This huge dictionary reviews thousands of films and books of the genres horror, action and fantasy. Richly illustrated with stills this compendium is written for fans.

- BPjS Aktuell – Amtliches Mitteilungsblatt der Bundesprüfstelle für jugendgefährdende Schriften und Medieninhalte, Forum Verlag, Bonn/Germany (this magazine is published three times a year).

This official organ of the "Bundesprüfstelle" (Kennedyallee 105-107, D-53175 Bonn/Germany) contains the index lists of banned media objects.

- Greene, Marilyn J. (Ed.): New Code Words for Censorship. Modern Labels for Curbs on the Press, World Press Freedom Committee, Reston 2000.

This compilation contains some international texts on recent censorship world wide. Some new code words are "codes of ethics", "self-regulation" and "responsibilities" of the press.

- Heins, Marjorie: Sex, Sin, and Blasphemy. A Guide to America's Censorship Wars, The New Press, New York 1993.

Heins explores in her in-depth study the boundaries of conventional taste and shows how much sensitive taboos determine the culture in the USA.

- Kiste Nyberg, Amy: Seal of approval. The history of the comics code, Jackson/USA 1998.

This revised dissertation deals with the development of reprisals against comic-books since Dr. Wertham. The author - Prof. at the Seton Hall University - researches the reasons of campaigns against graphic novels especially of religious groups.

- Larsen, Otto N.: Voicing Social Concern: The Mass Media - Violence - Pornography - Censorship - Organization - Social Science - The Ultramultiversity, University Press of America, Lanham 1994.

Prof. emeritus Larsen (University of Washington) and participant of the Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography, compiles in this book a lot of elucidating lectures and speeches on these topics.

- Ohmer, Anja: Gefährliche Bücher? Zeitgenössische Literatur im Spannungsfeld zwischen Kunst und Zensur, Diss., Tübingen 1999, Nomos Verlag, Baden-Baden/Germany 2000.

This study examines book banning in the field of contemporary literature. Between art and censorship applies this area of conflict.

- Pieper, Werner (Ed.): Verfemt - Verbannt - Verboten. Musik & Zensur. Weltweit, Die Grüne Kraft, Löhrbach/Germany 1999.

Based on issue 6/98 of the British magazine "Index on Censorship" this German book deals with suppressed and banned music world wide. Several entries explain the situation of forbidden musics mainly in Europe and America. Vol. 2, which focuses the German history of censoring music, is in print.

- Post, Robert C. (Ed.): Censorship and Silencing. Practices of Cultural Regulation, The Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, Los Angeles 1998.

The compilation of symposium papers held at the Getty Inst. in 1994-1995 contents a lot of highly intelligent statements. It has three parts: Censorship: The Repressive State, Discourse: The Tutelary State, Silencing: The Egalitarian State.

- Robertson QC, Geoffrey: Freedom, the Individual and the Law, Penguin Books, London 1993, 7th Edition.

A classic guide to civil liberties and citizen's right mainly in Britain.

- Seim, Roland: Zwischen Medienfreiheit und Zensureingriffen. Eine medien- und rechtssoziologische Untersuchung zensorischer Eingriffe in bundesdeutsche Populärkultur, Diss. phil. (Ph.D. thesis), Univ. of Münster, Telos Verlag, Münster/Germany 1997.

This German sociological dissertation ("Between Media Freedom and Censorship: The Sociology of Media and Law on Censorship Interventions in German Popular Culture") examine the reasons for censorship and the structure that such intrusions on the free speech can take. The examination begins with an historical overview, provides the important terms, legal basis and all key institutional players involved with control and self-regulation, followed by case studies of all kinds.

- Seim, Roland/Spiegel, Josef (Eds.): "Ab 18" - zensiert, diskutiert, unterschlagen. Beispiele aus der Kulturgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Band 1, Telos Verlag, Münster/Germany 1998³.

----- : Der kommentierte Bildband zu "Ab 18" - zensiert, diskutiert, unterschlagen. Zensur in der deutschen Kulturgeschichte ["Ab 18" - Band 2], Telos Verlag, Münster/Germany 1999.

These richly illustrated and annotated documentaries ("Ab 18" means "from 18 years up" - censored, discussed, suppressed - Censorship in German cultural history) show mainly examples from the media, which are restricted or banned in Germany. But most of the examples (films, books, comics, records, new media etc.) are of foreign extractions. Vol. 1 displays also some texts written by involved artists like Klaus Staeck and Jörg Buttgerit; Vol. 2 contains an annotated bibliography and a list of important internet addresses for further research.

- Shattuck, Roger: Forbidden Knowledge. From Prometheus to Pornography, St. Martin's Press, New York 1996.

This sophisticated book reveals the difficult history of some hidden topics in culture. His conclusion compiles the "Six categories of forbidden knowledge", for instance inaccessible, unattainable knowledge, prohibited by religious, moral or secular authorities, dangerous, destructive, fragile, delicate and ambiguous knowledge.

- Shaw, Collin: Deciding What We Watch: Taste, decency, and media ethics in the UK and the USA, Oxford University Press, Oxford/ England 1999.

Shaw focuses on the moral basis and history of regulation as it has been applied to major issues of taste and decency, such as the protection of children, obscenity and indecency.

- Trebbin, Frank: Die Angst sitzt neben Dir – Gesamtausgabe –, Berlin/ Germany 1998 (published oneself).

This excellent large-format filmography on horror and fantasy assembles thousands of competent film reviews and valuations. Essential reading for cineasts and fans of strange movies.

- Vogelgesang, Waldemar: Jugendliche Video-Cliquen. Action- und Horrorvideos als Kristallisationspunkte einer neuen Fankultur, Diss. phil., Univ. of Trier, Westdeutscher Verlag, Opladen/Germany 1990.

This German sociological dissertation deals with the rarely considered topic of the juvenile fandom of horror videos. It researches into the complex structure of peer groups which are fond of films the majority of society rejects. He finds out that these fans are not "videots" but specialized and reasonable members of a "deviant" subculture.

- Winfield, Betty Honchin: Bleep!... Censoring Rock and Rap Music, New York 1998.

Expensive book on the history of censoring rock and rap music.

Author's Note:

Born in 1965 in Münster/Germany I have studied art history, sociology and philosophy in Münster and Berlin, and received a M.A. degree in art history with a thesis on Alfred Kubin's depiction of "eros and thanatos" in his early works. In 1997 I received my Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Münster with a doctoral dissertation on censorship in German popular culture. I am a part-time lecturer in sociology, publisher and author. In some respects I have made my "filthy hobby" to the central topic of my academic research. Well, now I am just waiting that my own documentary books were banned itself (not really!).

These books are available via www.amazon.de or directly from:

Telos Verlag Dr. Roland Seim M.A.
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Abstract:

This paper deals with the area of conflict of free speech versus censorship mainly in Germany. It shows the reasons for the censors and the behavior of a special fandom which is fond of banned material. Both groups are connected together in a kind of a symbiotic relationship. The paper tries to find out, why censorship is inevitable for the moral majority and might be fascinating for the fans of the bizarre. Banned stuff is thrilling.

At least, everything we see and hear has been censored in some way. But banning explicit material shows us clearly the societal boundaries of our norms and regulations. It gives a truly evidence of the "Zeitgeist".

