

Cambridge University Press
0521573122 - Press Censorship in Elizabethan England
Cyndia Susan Clegg
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

This is a revisionist history of press censorship in the rapidly expanding print culture of the sixteenth century. Professor Clegg establishes the nature and source of the controls, and evaluates their means and effectiveness. The state wanted to control the burgeoning press, but there were difficulties in practice because of the competing and often contradictory interests of the Crown, the Church, and the printing trade. By considering the literary and bibliographical evidence of books actually censored and placing them in the literary, religious, economic, and political culture of the time, Clegg concludes that press control was not a routine nor a consistent mechanism but an individual response to particular texts that the state perceived as dangerous. This will be the standard reference work on Elizabethan press censorship, and is also a history of the Elizabethan state's principal crises.

Cambridge University Press
0521573122 - Press Censorship in Elizabethan England
Cyndia Susan Clegg
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PRESS CENSORSHIP IN ELIZABETHAN
ENGLAND

Cambridge University Press
0521573122 - Press Censorship in Elizabethan England
Cyndia Susan Clegg
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PRESS CENSORSHIP IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

CYNDIA SUSAN CLEGG

Professor of English, Pepperdine University, Malibu



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 0521573122 - Press Censorship in Elizabethan England
 Cyndia Susan Clegg
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
 40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
 Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa
<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 1997

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
 and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
 no reproduction of any part may take place without
 the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1997
 First paperback edition 2003

Typeset in Baskerville 11/12½ pt

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Clegg, Cyndia Susan.
 Press censorship in Elizabethan England / Cyndia Susan Clegg.
 p. cm.

ISBN 0 521 57312 2 (hardback)

1. Freedom of the press – Great Britain.
2. Censorship – Great Britain.
3. Great Britain – History – Elizabeth – 1558–1603.
 I. Title.

PN4748.G7C48 1997
 323.44'5'0941-dc20 96-36670 CIP

ISBN 0 521 57312 2 hardback
 ISBN 0 521 54586 2 paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

Cambridge University Press
0521573122 - Press Censorship in Elizabethan England
Cyndia Susan Clegg
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

*To
Caitlin Wheeler
and
Michael Wheeler*

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page xi</i>
PART I THE PRACTICE OF CENSORSHIP	
1. Privilege, license, and authority: the Crown and the press	3
2. Elizabethan press controls: “in a more calme and quiet reigne”	30
3. Elizabethan censorship proclamations: “to conserve her realm in an universal good peace”	66
PART II CENSORED TEXTS	
4. Catholic propagandists: “concerning the Queen’s majesty or the realm without licence”	77
5. George Gascoigne and the rhetoric of censorship: <i>A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres</i> (1573) and <i>The Posies</i> (1575)	103
6. John Stubbs’s <i>The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf</i> and realpolitik: “The kings sin striketh the land” but “God Save the Queen”	123
7. The review and reform of Holinshed’s <i>Chronicles</i> : “reporte of matters of later yeers that concern the State”	138
8. Martin Marprelate and the puritan press: “as thou hast two eares, so use them both”	170
9. The 1599 bishops’ ban: “shreud suspect of ill pretences”	198

Cambridge University Press
0521573122 - Press Censorship in Elizabethan England
Cyndia Susan Clegg
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

x	<i>Contents</i>	
10.	Conclusion: “That libertie Poets of late . . . have exceeded”	218
	<i>Notes</i>	225
	<i>Index</i>	288

Preface

Renaissance literary studies have been engaged of late in a lively reappraisal of the interrelationships of literature, politics, and culture in early modern England. At the same time that this enterprise has embraced the new by grounding its rereading of early modern texts in postmodern theory, it has been remarkably remiss in failing to reconsider those “old” assumptions that shaped political and historical studies – particularly with regard to print culture. This methodological dichotomy has yielded an interesting conundrum. We have come to accept literature as highly political and the political system governing press control as highly repressive. This would hardly be problematic except for the widely accepted premise that the principal end of press control in early modern England was to rout out discourse that did not uphold the state’s religio-political hegemony. In *Censorship and Interpretation*, Annabel Patterson has proposed an appealing way out of this contradiction – functional ambiguity, that is, a code of discourse accepted by both authors and the state that allowed religio-political discourse to be contained by linguistic indeterminacy. Ironically, Patterson’s work has served as fundamental to new historicist and cultural materialist studies at the same time that these studies have collapsed the notion of literature that enables Patterson’s hermeneutics of censorship. Functional ambiguity works best for what Renaissance writers called “poesy,” but historicist/cultural studies have exploded our concepts of literature to include a vast array of texts. This expanded notion of text and intertextuality, confronting us as it does with so many more of those “puzzling incidents of noncensorship” noted by Patterson than poesy, springs the lock of prevailing assumptions about press control.

This study, which rehistoricizes the study of press censorship, began by casting aside the dearly held assumptions about press controls and replacing them with questions. What were the mechan-

Cambridge University Press
0521573122 - Press Censorship in Elizabethan England
Cyndia Susan Clegg
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xii

Preface

isms of press control in early modern England? How were they instituted? What kind of legal theory governed the controls? How were controls enforced? For answers I turned to historical archives – Star Chamber records, State Papers, records and manuscripts in the library of the Church of England at Lambeth Palace Library, historical manuscripts in collections of the British Library and the Huntington Library, records of the printing trade, and early modern printed books – particularly censored texts. Approaching the historical record with the first three questions took me in the same path that Frederick Siebert had followed in his history of censorship, *Freedom of the Press in England, 1476–1776*, but the fourth led me in an entirely different direction. The first three enabled a description of how censorship should work – a theory of censorship. Looking at how controls were enforced moved me from a consideration of theory to one of practice. The historical record makes those incidents of noncensorship far less puzzling by revealing the distance between enacting mechanisms for control and regularly and systematically employing those mechanisms. Indeed, actual practices in government and the printing trade reveal multiple religious, political, economic, and social interests competing for expression and control. Book production and controls were not a whole cloth of state authority. Despite these often contradictory and competing practices, however, censorship did occur. If the motive for this censorship could not be located in the efficient practice of government censorship, what then? My study turned to censored texts themselves to consider what protocols, what ideologies, what kinds of language invoked censorship. Over and over again, the highly allusive language of censored texts demanded that the texts themselves be historicized, that is, read as fully as possible within the political, religious, economic, and literary contexts that produced them. This book, then, is principally a history of press censorship. The texts and contexts of censorship, however, have determined that it should be more than an “acts and monuments” of censorship (a book of martyrs?). Since each censorship “event” is actually a complex locus in which multiple issues and interests are represented, this is a book about books (the material objects and the authors, patrons, printers, and authorizers), and the political, religious, and literary culture that produced them. It is a book that bears testimony to the degree to which print culture became a compelling force in England in the late sixteenth-century – compelling enough that the central religious, political, literary, and

aesthetic issues of the day received consideration in print. It also bears testimony to the anxieties that the growth in printed texts produced – certainly in the Church and state, but also in the printing trade and among writers. Church, state, and individuals were anxious about how they were represented in print and how these representations might destabilize their authority. Printers and publishers were anxious about adequate employment and their rights to copy. Writers were anxious about how print would affect their reception. Efforts to control the press were measures taken to alleviate anxieties.

Lest we judge these early modern efforts to quell anxiety too harshly, we should be reminded that print culture was as new to people in the sixteenth century as electronic media is to us today. The United States Congress in February 1996 passed the Communications Decency Act to outlaw “indecent” communications on the Internet as part of the Telecommunications Reform Act. Those economic forces – including publishers, film studios, recording companies, and software developers – which would reap economic benefits by extending copyright to electronic media have repeatedly pressed for congressional support to make it a felony to distribute any licensed material beyond its initial authorized use. The language in these matters – “authorized use,” “license,” “copyright,” “decency” – echoes the language present throughout this book used in the late sixteenth century in relationship to controlling print. It is perplexing that efforts to control the press in early modern England have produced more indignation in recent years than V-chips, digital rights, and internet censorship – or commercial control of American television programming. Indignation, however, has too often been the point of studying censorship. We can gain far more by recognizing that by studying censorship in any culture at a given time we can locate not only where power resides but what instabilities exist in the grounding of that authority.

The shape this book has taken follows in part the structure that emerged from my questions, in part the objects and methods of my consideration. The first three chapters focus on the mechanisms of control; the last seven on censorship practices. What began as a study of early modern press censorship, however, has become a book about England during the reign of Elizabeth I. This limitation does not mean that Elizabethan censorship is representative of early modern censorship practices – quite the contrary. Censorship

resulted from (and responded to) particular and local events and personalities, and it (theory and practice) altered with changes in state affairs. Since the death of a monarch was one of the most significant events in early modern national histories, the deaths of Mary and Elizabeth offer convenient margins for a book that easily could have doubled or tripled in size had it considered all of early modern England. The book's organization, besides growing out of the kinds of questions I asked, emerged from the dichotomy in my sources. Several years ago in a seminar at the Huntington Library, Patrick Collinson remarked that the difference between historians and people who work in literature is that historians study documents and literature people study texts. Since earlier studies of press censorship considering either texts or documents have proven insufficient, I have considered both. I have tried to employ the methodology of both a literary scholar and a historian, but without a distinct divide. Though the first three chapters may appear to be traditionally historical and the last seven traditionally literary, I have throughout subjected historical evidence to the kind of subtle textual reading literary scholars employ. Likewise, books, their texts, and their production, have formed a very important part of my historical evidence.

Fairly representing historical and textual evidence has been my principal concern. Since most of the early printed books and manuscripts exist only in archives and rare book libraries, I often quote rather than merely cite. I perhaps err in the direction of over quotation and citation but do so because so many former assumptions about censorship have grown out of misquotation, inference, and misinformation. Early printed texts are represented here without spelling modernization, though early modern printing house conventions of using "u" and "v" and "i" and "j" interchangeably are abandoned, as are "v" for "w," the long s, ligatures, accents on doubled letters, contractions using "~," and "y" for thorn (for which modern "th" is employed). Obvious typographical errors such as inverted letters or arbitrary font substitutions have been corrected.

Research for this project was largely enabled by the resources of the Huntington Library – certainly their collection but also their outstanding staff, especially curators Tom Lange and Alan Jutzi, and Steve Tabor, who assisted me with searches of the *English Short Title Catalogue* at University of California at Riverside's cataloguing

Cambridge University Press
0521573122 - Press Censorship in Elizabethan England
Cyndia Susan Clegg
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Preface

xv

terminal at the Huntington. My research at the Huntington and in England received funding from the Andrew K. Mellon Foundation and the British Academy Scholars Exchange Program. The Seaver College Dean's Office of Pepperdine University provided me with travel funding. For training my historical eye, I am indebted to members of the Tudor Stuart Seminar at the Huntington Library, particularly Mary Robertson and Eleanor Searle, who have been very helpful readers along the way. Kevin Sharpe and Mark Kishlansky offered excellent tutelage on doing historical research. I genuinely appreciate the efforts of my colleagues in literature who read chapters and made helpful comments, particularly, Peter Blayney, Jean R. Brink, Elizabeth Story Donno, Alan H. Nelson, James Riddell, and Stanley Stewart. To H. E. Igoe, for making his copy of the 1587 Holinshed's *Chronicles* available to me, I am especially grateful. For their efforts in seeing this work through publication at Cambridge University Press, I am grateful to Sarah Stanton, editorial manager, Humanities, and Lindeth Vasey. Richard Dutton and Christopher Haigh, readers for Cambridge, engaged in painstaking reading and offered invaluable counsel (and encouragement) that brought this book to its final form. Finally, I acknowledge the *Ben Jonson Journal* for giving me permission to include in chapter 2 the section on the 1586 Star Chamber Decree, which appeared in a somewhat different form as "The 1586 Decrees for Order in Printing and the Practice of Censorship."