



Literary Censorship: The Changing Standards

Laila Al-Sharqi

King AbdulAziz University, Saudi-Arabia

Irum Saeed Abbasi (Corresponding author)

California State University, CA, USA

E-mail: irum.abbasi@gmail.com

Received: 14-03- 2015

Accepted: 18-06- 2015

Advance Access Published: August 2015

Published: 01-11- 2015

doi:10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.6p.33

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.6p.33>

Abstract

Censorship is a double-edged sword that has bred legal, political, and moral wrangling across the globe. The basic controversy, which harkens back to ancient times, stems from the motivation and intention of the censoring authority. The censoring authority controls literary and informational contents, based on the promulgated political, moral, religious, and cultural values of the land. Historically, the politicians, judiciary, clergymen, powerful groups, and the public at large were involved in guarding public morals and rooting out obscenity. The obscenity laws outlawed the selling, purchasing, printing, importing, and mailing of obscene items. However, in today's day and age, the Internet has made it difficult to control the circulation of what was once considered obscene. Censorship has evolved to monitor and control online content to keep abreast with the changing times; nevertheless, it does not always effectively control the questionable content. Moreover, in the past, cultural values and demography played a vital role in deciding what needed to be censored. Internet, as an electronic global village, has redefined demography; therefore, the global as well as indigenous standards upon which literature were once analyzed for censorship is now blurred. The promise of free speech has given power to the people that live in mature democracies. However, there should be a self-imposed code of conduct so that the right of free speech does not infringe on others' right of existence. This paper reviews censorship, tracing its historical path and evolution over the years, its changing standards, and its pros and cons. Lastly, the paper discusses the need to conjoin freedom of speech with the responsibility to protect the diverse cultures, religions, races, sects, genders, and especially the young generation.

Keywords: art, censorship, freedom of speech, literature, morality, obscenity

1. Literary Censorship: The Changing Standards

Censorship is an official restriction of any form of expression that might be seen as potentially threatening to the political, social, or moral order; it can be imposed by an authority at the local or national level, a religious body, or sometimes even by an influential private group (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th Ed.). Censorship can be applied to a broad range of materials including, but not limited to, postal mail, press, speech, dance, literature, art, theatre, cinema, television, radio, photography, email, and Internet. The word 'censor' is derived from the Latin word 'censere', meaning 'to value' or 'to tax'; a 'censor', in ancient Rome, was a magistrate who had an additional responsibility of supervising public morals (Kidd, 2008).

Censorship has been used, in the past, to suppress information and the circulation of obscene materials. The word 'obscene' is derived from the Latin word 'obscenus' meaning "adverse, inauspicious, ill-omened; also abominable, disgusting, filthy, indecent" (Potter, 2013, p.3). To guard public morals, politicians proposed obscenity laws, which were originally formulated with the main objective of suppressing pornography. Nevertheless, soon after the law went into effect, serious writing also became its target. The argument became that if a text is legally obscene, it cannot be literature and may actually be pornography. Therefore, legally obscene content was marked as ineligible to be debated upon and also beyond the redeeming power of literature and/or law (Kidd, 2008).

Censorship is a controversial issue of global scope; albeit, it is not well understood and carries a negative connotation with a broad consensus that its opposition is supposedly good (Kidd, 2008). The scope of censorship may either be preventive or punitive, depending on whether a given example of expression has been made public or not (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th Ed.). Pro and anti-censorship controversy has echoed in many places including legislative houses, courtrooms, public school and library meetings, civil organization meetings, and social gatherings. The basic controversy over censorship stems from the lack of a comprehensive definition regarding literature and its boundaries. Some governments, kingdoms, dictatorship, and powerful groups have earned notoriety for their strict censorship of literature, art, media, press, Internet, and other informational networks. The controversies surrounding censorship are actually debates regarding the anticipated form of education, citizenship, and society (Kazemek, 1995). The broad spectrum of human intellect, wisdom, and responsibility signify the rationale behind censorship since each culture has its own set of moral standards. Keeping in view the literary cultural significance, literature is analyzed at the local and

nationally level, which leads to deliberation and eventually result in the modification of original standards and expectations (Kidd, 2008). In the present day and age, however, the Internet has made it impossible to keep a check on questionable material. Any material acceptable in one country/culture is easily disseminated internationally, without due regard to cultural sensitivities of others, in the garb of freedom of speech and expression. This paper will discuss the past and present status of literary censorship, and how freedom of speech and freedom of expression are sometimes misused to promote irresponsible artistic works that are hurtful to other groups, races, sects, religions, and cultures.

2. History of Literary Censorship

Historically in the UK and the US, censorship laws have changed course many times to accommodate the apparent wishes of the majority. To combat the infiltration of obscene items into the society, influential politicians and lords proposed bills to outlaw the obscenity trade. Obscenity referred to a variety of ideas in literary context such as sexualized obscene bodies or bodies that purposefully violated particular religious and legal taboos (Jenkins, 1944). The jurists interpreted the obscenity laws and sided sometimes with the moral crusaders and sometimes with the free expression hawkers. Public morals vigilantes also took matters into their own hands under the banner of Christianity. For example, to fight obscenity in London, the Society for the Suppression of Vice (SSV) was founded in 1802, which was controlled by the Church of England, clergymen, lawyers, civil servants, and businessmen (Mullin, 2013). The SSV, from its outset, pursued the distributors of obscene items and its frequent targets were books, images, questionable toys, boxes carrying items imported from France, and play items retailed to young ladies at boarding schools. Detectives were hired, as informants, who purchased abominable items at the behest of SSV, which often led to the prosecution of offenders (Jenkins, 1944).

In the US in 1815, a first impression case concerning a private exhibition of an 'obscene' painting was brought to trial (Jenkins, 1944). The Philadelphia court took cognizance of the matter, claiming that courts are 'guardians of the public morals', and indicted Jesse Sharpless and others for their private display of an obscene painting. In 1817, the secretary and solicitor of the SSV, George Prichard, bragged that the spread of obscenity is effectively curbed because of the threat of prosecutions, which he believed also caused a wave of anxiety throughout the obscenity trade. In 1824, the SSV successfully lobbied to outlaw the display of obscene items. In 1829, the SSV was reinforced by London paid police force. Therefore, with an increased force, the SSV successfully ensured the arrest and prosecution of many obscenity traders including the elusive William Dugdale. Mr. Dugdale operated from different addresses and worked under various aliases to evade law; he was arrested many times for printing obscene books and importing massive amounts of French obscene items. The Chief Justice, Lord Campbell, presided over Dugdale's trial and learnt of the sale of obscene items on Holywell Street. Dugdale was given the maximum fine along with two years' imprisonment; nevertheless, the court did not confiscate obscene items, which resulted in his business flourishing even during his absence (Jenkins, 1944). Due to the profitable nature of the obscenity trade, Mr. Dugdale risked his freedom many times, and eventually died in prison two months after his last arrest.

After hearing the Dugdale trial, in 1857, Lord Campbell brought the issue of obscenity trade to the House of Commons. He addressed the House members stating that he had "learned with horror and alarm that a sale of poison more deadly than prussic acid, strychnine or arsenic—the sale of obscene publications and indecent books—was openly going on" (Mullin, 2013, p.13). Lord Campbell later proposed the 'Obscene Publication Bill' to control the dissemination of pornography in Britain (Potter, 2011). Campbell's bill was purportedly designed for literary content that was written with an 'intention' to corrupt the morals of the youth, and also for works that could potentially shock the decent feelings in well-controlled minds (Mullin, 2013). Campbell claimed that 'pornography' rather than fine art or fiction was the main focus of the bill. During a debate on the proposed bill, Campbell read aloud a letter by Prichard that detailed the work carried out by the SSV since its inception. In the letter, Prichard claimed that the trade in obscene items was a lucrative business. However, the punishment was no more than an ineffective 'occupational hazard'; since, the law did not require seizure or destruction of any questionable items (Mullin, 2013). Prichard declared, due to limited resources, a private society does not have the capability of effectively controlling an elusive trade, such as obscenity trade. He informed that SSV was able to prosecute only one out of six potential cases.

Prichard's testimony was helpful in convincing the MPs to vote in favor of the proposed bill. Campbell's bill was successfully passed by both Houses of Parliament; nevertheless, the MPs reassured that the bill would solely be applicable to "obscene and filthy publications exhibited in the shop windows for sale" rather than on material that is secured in gentlemen's studies (Mullin, 2013, p.15). Campbell triumphantly bragged about achieving his goal, which was "cleansing of a street notorious for brazen indecency" and compared the siege of the notorious Holywell Street with the siege of Delhi. (Mullin, 2013, p.16). Campbell died in 1861 and with his demise the Campbell Act floutingly encroached upon other literary content, although Campbell had reassured the Parliament that it would not affect publication of novels and poems (Potter, 2011). The Obscene Publication Act also laid down a particular structure of censorship that encouraged individuals to initiate censorship proceedings through which pressure groups in the UK and the US abetted and directed censorship. In 1867, a legal turning point came when the Lord Chief Justice, Cockburn, interpreted the Obscene Publication Act through the 'Hicklin Ruling' (Mullin, 2013). The 'Hicklin Ruling' laid down an overly broad definition of written obscenity, according to which literary content was to be considered obscene if "the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to immoral influences and into whose hands a publication of this sort may fall" (Potter, 2011, p. 84). Therefore, Hicklin Ruling lowered the threshold of censorship from the original 'intention to corrupt' to a new dimension of 'tendency to corrupt'. The prosecuting attorney, because of this broad interpretation, was able to justify censoring the whole book even if one

of its passages, read out of context, had a 'tendency' to corrupt the mind of a young person (Potter, 2013). In the UK and the US, the obscenity legislation was focused only on the potential corruption that could be spread through the representation of sex and homosexuality; thus, the images of disease and social breakdown were published freely (Potter, 2013).

In 1873 Anthony Comstock formed the New York Society for Suppression of Vice and immediately sought arrests of obscenity traders (Potter, 2013). His moral crusade against obscenity was endorsed and funded by fellow wealthy businessmen; subsequently, in 1873, the US Congress passed a bill proposed by Comstock as the Comstock Act. This bill extended the 1865 postal code law that had already allowed custom officials and mailmen to seize obscene publications (Potter, 2013). The Comstock Act extended federal regulations, beyond confiscation of obscene materials, to include any material that could be used to prevent conception or soliciting abortion. People were arrested for publishing content that advised pregnant women to avoid sexual relations or for distributing pamphlets explaining birth control to relatively uneducated women. The Comstock Act ruled that if a person is found guilty of deliberately sending or receiving obscene material, he would be sent to jail for 'hard labor' for up to ten years (Feldman, 2008). In 1888–1889, the National Vigilance Association (NVA) successfully prosecuted James Henry Vizetelly for publishing obscene novels by Émile Zola. As a backlash against the NVA's war against the Empire music hall, the newspaper coined the term 'pruders on the prowl' for the anti-vice societies (Bradshaw & Potter, 2013).

The moral crusade against obscenity continued successfully and Comstock boasted of having convicted enough people to fill a passenger train of 61 coaches (approximately 4,000 people) and having destroyed 160 tons of obscene literature (Jenkins, 1944; Potter, 2013). In 1889, after much anticipation, a broad reference to obscenity was offered, defining it as "a publication containing immodest and indecent matter, the reading whereof would have a tendency to deprave and corrupt the minds of those into whose hands the publication might fall and whose minds are open to such immoral influences" (Jenkins, 1944, p. 98). The Bishop of London in 1899 formed the Public Morality Council that set the law in motion if existing laws failed to curb the flow of obscene materials (Bradshaw & Potter, 2013). In Britain, Vigilante societies including the National Vigilance Society, formed in 1885, and the National Society Purity Crusade, formed in 1901, also successfully pursued and persecuted authors, publishers, distributors, and consumers of obscene books, (Potter, 2013).

The law continued to interfere intermittently, with literature and arts, as a moderator of public taste. To combat obscenity laws, anti-censorship advocates and liberals came up with their own theory; the Laisser-Faire Theory of Artistic Censorship that considered art to be noble and belonging to a domain that is 'not obscene' (Jenkins, 1944). Therefore, liberals believed that depictions in art did not inspire lustful desires that have a tendency to corrupt a young mind. The liberals also supported a doctrine of dual appreciation, which consists of proper and improper appreciation of art. The proper appreciation of an art means that a human mind does not react to the depictions expressed in an art as it would otherwise to a real object. In this case, the effect of an art is independent of its subject matter and does not encourage its imitation. Whereas, the improper appreciation of art means that viewers react to an art work such that if an obscene item is portrayed, then the thoughts and desires are sensually tunneled. The liberals also argued that an art work that treats obscene content in an artistic or literary manner is considered a 'dangerous art', even though, it may not be dangerous. Furthermore, they explained that an art work has a complete healthy impact on majority of its viewers and that the 'dangerous art' adversely affects only the subnormal people. Hence, they argued that art cannot be censored just to protect a subnormal minority because the majority of people appreciate art in its true sense (Jenkins, 1944).

The period between 1900-1940 exhibited yet another strict form of censorship in the US and UK and a mention of prostitutes was enough reason to have the book seized (Potter, 2011; Potter, 2013). The threat of prosecution caused many publishers and printers to revise vast amount of novels and poems. The tighter censorship laws were justified with the rationale that the reading public has expanded; therefore, there is all the more need to protect the larger public. Notwithstanding that the literature was heavily policed to prevent dissemination of sexual content, nevertheless, the writers neatly assimilated obscene content into literature and also questioned the control of nation states on the production and circulation of literature. There was a remarkable increase among writers who wanted to flaunt their right of free speech; resultantly, the novels and poems of these times were experimentally obscene. The writers did not want to accept the blanket definition of obscenity anymore, and sought an appropriate guideline for literature and the nature of obscenity. Some people viewed literature as a dangerous form of corruption, whereas others considered it as a platform of sexual liberation (Potter, 2011). Some influential modernistic publishers fled to Paris and made their own semi-legal and private distribution networks, which led to debates of protecting international rights of banned authors and books. While the modernistic publishers printed and circulated modernistic writing abroad, the British and US authorities in 1910-1920 protected their borders from the influx of obscene books claiming that such literature posed a risk to national security (Potter, 2013).

The anti-censorship contributions of T.S. Eliot as an author, editor, and publisher are noteworthy. T.S. Eliot defended authors' right of free speech against censorship and pointed to the double standards and hidden puritanism of liberal American editors. As a publisher at Faber & Faber, Eliot himself delicately balanced between supporting authors' freedom, performing his own aesthetic and moral judgment, and protecting his company from potential prosecution (Potter, 2011). There was also some contradiction in Eliot's position towards censorship; as an editor, he asked Doctor O' Conner's to remove a reference to 'pubic hair' from one of his monologues. However, the contradiction in Eliot's stance is justified due to the historical circumstances he lived in (Potter, 2011). Eliot was also critical of the hypocrisy and power of the mainstream press, which condemned what it explored, advertised, and embodied. He suggested that

the preoccupation of the popular press with obscenity condemnation developed in alliance with the public's increased focus on sexuality. Eliot argued that the freedom of writers was curtailed due to the power and moral values of the sex-obsessed public. He gave a neat description of the double standards of the press in the following words " we have lately seen in the daily press, which offers to his readers a small amount of news and an extensive space of bathing beauties, direct its readers to "obscene" books and "obscene" picture shows, and then exult in their condemnation" (Potter, 2011, p. 88). Eliot also intervened in censorship debates to transfer the allegation of obscenity from literature to the pornographic content and also on popular sexualized culture.

In 1911, an American legal scholar named Theodore Schroeder rose as the leader of the American Free Speech League (Potter, 2011). Theodore Schroeder defended authors' right to free speech based on the first amendment of US constitution declaring that " no matter upon what subject, nor how injurious to the public welfare any particular idea thereon may be deemed to be, the constitutional right is violated whenever anyone is not legally free to express any such or other sentiments" (Feldman 2008, p. 218). He also claimed that "...moral concepts are a matter of geography and evolution... all morality is relative" (Feldman 2008, p. 218). Theodore Schroeder defended the freedom of speech and based his arguments on the psychoanalytic approach, which suggests that a sense of obscene is a shared trait of human psyche; therefore, he argued that obscenity is subjective and cannot be used to regulate books (Potter, 2011). Moreover, other free speech groups also emerged between 1920-1930, including the PEN international in 1921, pleading that authors have rights beyond national borders (Potter, 2013). The tide against obscenity gradually turned towards tolerating artwork that would have been considered obscene in earlier times. In 1933, a New York judge ruled in favor of the famously censored novel 'Ulysses' noting that literature and obscenity are mutually exclusive (Bradshaw & Potter, 2013). This signified a change; the liberal jurists were considering the purity of artist's motive, the truth in the narrative, and the charisma and subtlety of style when making their decisions on artwork (Jenkins, 1944). Furthermore, in 1959, the Obscene Publication Act successfully passed in the US, which required expert witnesses to judge the literary merits of literature before censorship. Thus, the new act provided greater protection to the publishers and also to the literature itself. The new act concerned itself with the literary ambition and author's intentions than its effect on the morals of the youth.

3. Literature and Art

Literature is a vehicle through which moral, religious, cultural, and political values are shared. Notwithstanding that the oral speech content has far-reaching implications, written content goes farther due to its relative permanency. Literature and art have been subject to censorship since ancient times. In a literal sense, literature is defined as "written works (such as poems, plays, and novels) that are considered to be very good and to have lasting importance" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2015), or "written works, especially those considered of superior or lasting artistic merit" (Oxford Dictionary, 2015). The main moral or educational purpose of literature is to assist in understanding human nature; nevertheless, such understanding is not always put to good use and may also be potentially used for immoral purposes. Southern (1930) suggests that impurity is rooted in bans and prohibitions of the 'pseudo pure'; biologically, a healthy mind may feel disgusted or repulsed by certain things, but it does not appraise anything as indecent because the concept of indecency originates from previous conscious and unconscious determinations. The mental energy, which gets stored due to censorship and mental suppression, is eventually redirected from a normal to an abnormal channel and thrives due to continued use (Southern, 1930).

The potential positive and negative effects of literary arts were challenged throughout history. Plato advised against indulging in fictional art and literature, claiming that the fictional art has distinguishable negative ethical effects on a human soul, which itself is prone to self-deception and weakness of the will (Kingwell, 2014). Notwithstanding that Aristotle sided with the literary arts by endorsing their educational value; he advised against using art to depict honorable as languishing and evil as thriving. However, the modern fiction honors morally dubious figures by depicting them as flourishing (Carr & Davis, 2007). Another argument is that any sympathetic examination of weak characters or exploring the causes of weak character may cause others to be more aware of their own weaknesses. Additionally it is pointed that moral disturbances may result when artistic and aesthetic cognitivism reveal the psychological worlds of fictional characters (Carr & Davis, 2007).

As opposed to views promoted by Platonic radical moralism, 'ethicism' is said to carry a weaker practical implication for education (Carr & Davis, 2007). Kieren (2006) also claims that the moral aspect of a work is immaterial to its value as art. The word 'ethic' is defined as "an area of study that deals with ideas about what is good and bad behavior: a branch of philosophy dealing with what is morally right or wrong" (Merriam-Webster, 2015). Ethicism asserts that "(i) if a work of art lacks moral content, it cannot have any other educational (e.g., literary or aesthetic) value, and (ii) if a work has negative moral content it is entirely without educational merit" (Carr & Davis, 2007, p. 96). The current educational trend prefers a work of high moral significance, albeit low aesthetic merit, over an aesthetically satisfying and morally dubious work. Hence, children's literature is evaluated based on the alleged strength of its moral potential with little consideration given to its aesthetic quality (Carr & Davis, 2007). Kingwell (2014) argues against treating fictional literature as a moral stimulant drug and explains that anyone entertaining such an idea is a bad reader. He notes that appraising literature on ethical grounds is a definitive error and would cause a disservice to literature in the name of ethics.

Art is defined as "something that is created with imagination and skill and that is beautiful or that expresses important ideas or feelings" (Merriam-Webster, 2015). The goal of artistic efforts and the object of artistic evaluation is the promotion of artistic features that differentiate types of works such as art, history, journalism, and personal photographs

(Kieren, 2006). Artistic value consists of aesthetic elements such as a work's harmony and complexity. Various aspects of an artwork that includes its fictional status, cognitive content, or instructional value are theoretically distinct and have no internal relations; however, their interactions may potentially interfere with one another (Kieren, 2006). In the Horatian tradition, moral psychology appreciates aesthetic and artistic objects and believes that when attention is given to good, true, and beautiful, a kind of pleasure is aroused that excites imitation, reflection, and reformation (Carr & Davis, 2007). Notwithstanding, the coherence of imagery, complex developmental themes, and brilliant styles are important characteristics of art; however, qualities such as loveliness, delicacy, and suggestiveness distinguish art from obscenity (Kieren, 2006; Jenkins, 1944). Literary arts are evaluated, favorably and/or unfavorably, at the national or international level. When a book is prized, it is considered valued; whereas, when a book is censored, it is considered devalued (Kidd, 2008). Notwithstanding that the aim of censorship appears to be in contrast with that of prizing, both are complementary mechanisms employed to evaluate the literary content. Moreover, both, prizing and censorship result in greater access, publicity, and symbolic capital.

4. Censorship Pros and Cons

The negative connotation attached to censorship mars the importance of keeping a check on the literature that is accessible to general public. Censorship is often considered dangerous to individuals and literature; nevertheless, it sustains literature as an idea and practice, assists in producing new classics, and also limits the literary field. Some artists are accused of misusing their freedom of expression and insensitively capitalizing on obscenity. Censorship, thus, is not without merits. Allegorically, censorship can be compared with the good and the bad bacteria. Bad bacteria are harmful to the human body, whereas good bacteria help with the digestion of food. Building on this analogy, anti-censorship efforts are needed to protect art and literature (like antibiotics); while pro-censorship efforts are necessitated when literary arts are too difficult to digest (like probiotics). Therefore, in a healthy society, pro-censorship efforts are crucial in keeping a check on the promulgation of bad content.

Pros. Censorship is a structure that is used to appraise a piece of work with markedly surprising features and energies (Kidd, 2008). The best way to suppress a book is to ignore it, not censor it; censoring a book salvages it from oblivion and gives it a spot in public life and cultural memory (Kidd, 2008). It goes without saying that not all people use literature to impart knowledge or share valued opinions or creative art. Some people use their pen or art to derogate others and capitalize on their crooked thinking, which may resonate with others sharing the same thought pattern. A plethora of examples are found on bookshelves or the Internet that promulgate racism and religious bigotry. Therefore, freedom of expression and freedom of speech should come with an attached 'responsibility tag'. The litmus test for censorship may be based on whether the content is capable of causing harm to another person, race, group, sect, religion, or country. Limitations should rightly be placed on speech when people share their opinions irresponsibly, which may lead to disharmony in society. Moreover, inhibiting the spread of literature or art, which is harmful to others, is a prerogative of monitoring authorities; therefore, freedom hawkers must realize that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand. Authors and artists must be held accountable, in a court of law, if their work infringes upon the right of co-existence of other races, religions, sects, and cultures.

Cons. The current approach towards censorship has proved to be counterintuitive. Notwithstanding that censorship worked in the past by curbing the spread of questionable literature; it now safeguards wider access to questionable material. For example, literature banned for containing content marked as too realistic or provocative is reevaluated and reclassified as 'literary classics' due to the anti-censorship work and the ideology 'dirt for art's sake' (Kidd, 2008). On a separate note, Kazemek (1995) suggests that the process of education and moral development is short-circuited by censorship, which is based on the premise that individuals are incapable of reason and choice. The censor does not allow or encourage readers to consider opposing ideas, and instead wants them to accept his/her political, social, and religious beliefs. Official censors take on the role of an 'average householder' who, ideally, should decide what books are acceptable and appropriate; discharging censors would put the family head back in control of educating the family (Southern, 1930). In essence, a true love for literature must be inculcated through education, by the family head, to combat pornography because the only true antidote to pornography is a healthy public taste.

5. Conclusion

Censorship is an ancient phenomenon that has evolved over the centuries. It can encompass almost all content; however, the most frequent targets are the press, books, works of art, media broadcasts, the Internet, e-mail, personal letters written by officials, and postal mail. Censorship has its merits and demerits, leading to controversial debates and legal battles. Historically, in the US and the UK, anti-vice societies campaigned against obscene literature and successfully persuaded lawmakers to pass legislation to block the dissemination of what they judged to be an obscene literature. The law empowered customs officials and mailmen to seize the modernists' work and obscene imported items. The offenders were prosecuted and imprisoned for writing, selling, purchasing, importing, and printing obscene items; however, such actions only added to the determination of authors. Despite the looming threats, authors spiced up their writing with sexual content not only to perk up sales, but also to flaunt their freedom of speech and freedom of expression. History has witnessed great transformation in the interpretation of the word 'obscene'; the US Congress passed laws to censor all material that had an 'intention to corrupt', which was later interpreted as any material that had a 'tendency to corrupt'. The courts also changed their stance from declaring themselves to be the guardians of public morals to declaring that literature and obscenity are mutually exclusive.

In the present era, more than ever, the standard of indecency has changed dramatically. Under the cover of political correctness, little to no regard is given to the sensitivities of other cultures. Ironically, bad publicity is sometimes used

as a tool for marketability to prey on an inquisitive public. The greater demand for the challenged material is cashed by printing scores of additional copies and also by posting it online to give access to public beyond national boundaries. The historical expedition of censorship shows extreme views between then and now. In essence, few concerns need to be addressed to protect literary arts and public morals simultaneously. Most importantly, a global standard should be set by convening representatives of all nations to agree on a distinction between literary arts that warrant protection from censorship and those that justify censorship. Through an international agreement, a statutory definition of what is 'legally obscene' is needed to root out the discrepancy associated with obscenity. A politically correct global society must find ways of not only protecting freedom of expression and freedom of speech, but also protecting the youth from dangerous art and literature. In the digital age, there is an ever-increasing need for a self-imposed code of conduct that can filter inappropriate artwork potentially infringing upon the right of co-existence of other cultures, religions, sects, and races.

References

- Art. (2015). In *Merriam-Webster online*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/art>
- Bradshaw, D., & Potter, R. (2013). *Prudes on the prowl: Fiction & obscenity in England, 1850 to the present day*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carr, D., & Davis, R. (2007). The lure of evil: Exploring moral formation on the dark side of literature and the arts. *Journal of Philosophy Of Education*, 41(1), 95-112. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9752.2007.00541.
- Censorship. In *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (6th Ed.)*. Available from <http://www.worldcat.org/title/columbia-electronic-encyclopedia-6th-edition/oclc/746941797?referer=di&ht=edition>
- Ethic. (2015). In *Merriam-Webster online*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethics>
- Feldman, S. M. (2008). *Free expression and democracy in America: A History*. London: University of Chicago Press, Ltd.
- Jenkins, I. (1944). The legal basis of literary censorship. *Virginia Law Review*, 31(1), pp.83-118. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1068570>
- Kazemek, F. E. (1995). Choice, reason, and censorship. *Reading Today*. p. 2018.
- Kidd, K. (2009). "Not censorship but selection": Censorship and/as prizing. *Children's Literature In Education*, 40(3), 197-216. doi:10.1007/s10583-008-9078-4
- Kieren, M. (2006). Art, morality and ethics: On the (im)moral character of art works and inter-relations to artistic value. *Philosophy Compass* 1(2) 129–143. doi: 0.1111/j.1747-9991.2006.00019.x
- Kingwell, M. (2014). The ethics of ethics and literature. *World Literature Today*, 88(5), 23.
- Literature. (2015). In *Merriam-Webster online*. Retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/literature>
- Literature. (2015). In *Oxford dictionary online*. Retrieved from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american_english/literature
- Mullin, K. (2013). Poison more deadly than Prussic acid: Defining obscenity after the 1857 Obscene Publication Act (1850-1885). In Bradshaw, D., & Potter, R. (Eds.), *Prudes on the prowl: Fiction & obscenity in England, 1850 to the present day* (pp. 11-29). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Potter, R. (2011). Censorship. In Harding, J., & Harding, J. (Eds.), In *T.S. Eliot in context* (pp.83 - 92). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Potter, R. (2013). *Obscene modernism: Literary censorship and experiment, 1900-1940*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Southern, G. (1930). Literary censorship. *The Australian Quarterly*, 2 (6), pp. 110-115. doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20628862>