

porary celibacy, for positive reasons of autonomy, a need for solitude, a search for passion, platonic companionship, time for their careers, improvement in communication with their partners, or antipathy toward possessiveness within partnerships. Some women become celibate as a consequence of widowhood, illness, disability, fear of AIDS or violence, dislike of penetration, sexual anxiety caused by childhood sexual abuse, or dislike of the unequal power dimension they perceive in genital relationships.

“Partnered” lesbian women experience less pressure about turning to celibacy than do partnered heterosexual women. All celibates in couples find it more difficult than single celibates to express their celibacy publicly, for fear of stigmatizing their partners. Still, many women find that celibacy enables them to view men as friends instead of lovers or enemies.

New definitions of contemporary female celibacy—which include defining it as a form of sexuality—change the philosophical meaning of the word. In the area of sexuality, women are not only breaking new ground philosophically but also making a cultural shift in the perception of celibacy, linguistically and practically.

See Also

CHASTITY: RELIGIOUS; MARRIAGE: OVERVIEW; SEXUALITY: OVERVIEW; SINGLE PEOPLE; VIRGINITY

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CENSORSHIP

Censorship is an exercise of the critical faculty that is sanctioned by institutional authority. Authorities use censorship to control the power to name: the power to define what is true and what is right. Efforts by authorities to censor fallacious or dangerous ideas are integral and often palpable parts of their efforts to proclaim and propagate factual or felicitous views. Sense is made by censoring nonsense.

All societies, from ancient Sumer and Egypt to the corporate states that make up the emerging global cultures of the microchip, practice some form of censorship. Censorship not only assumes different forms—for example, official, subterranean, and self-censorship—but also frequently operates under other names, for example, patriotism, reason, competition, good taste, or national security.

Censorship is the knot that binds power and knowledge. Social order is created, and bodies of knowledge are assembled and organized by marking boundaries between conformity and deviance, reason and chaos. In some societies these boundaries are codified into law and enforced by formal administrative agencies, censorship boards, police, judicial officers, or their representatives. Every social group supplements or supplants formal controls with social pressures, conventions, rituals, and institutional practices that discourage dissent. Censorship is therefore a pervasive, intractable, and sociologically significant constituent of all human communities.

The Received History of Censorship

The word *censorship* and the practices conventionally associated with it are, however, usually more narrowly conceived within the discourses of contemporary scholars, jurists, and human rights advocates. Censorship is commonly thought of as a historical development that accompanied the rise of the modern state and the invention of the printing press (Lahav, 1989). Conversely, the great victories against censorship and for freedom of expression are regarded as outcomes both of the scientific revolutions that occurred in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and of the western Enlightenment that followed in the eighteenth century (Bury, 1913).

The emergence of liberal democracies is associated with these developments. The American and French Revolutions were, in part, precipitated by restrictions on press freedom. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (1791) is regarded as a benchmark in the history of free expression. For the first time, a government formally barred itself from making any laws restricting freedom of speech, press, or religion. Subsequent legal controversies about censorship in the United States have therefore been largely restricted to: (1) issues of state or local censorships of books, the arts, and pornography; (2) questions related to the abuses of free speech and freedom of the press—for example, slander and

libel; and (3) controversies about the forms and limits of press censorship during wartime and other national emergencies, as well as controversies that permit some prior censorship of the writings of government employees and former government employees. In western democracies, such as the United Kingdom, where church and state retain formal ties, publications or practices that are deemed blasphemous may also be proscribed by government regulation.

Etymology supports this historically circumscribed, Eurocentric understanding of the term. *Censorship* derives from the root *cense*, from the Latin *cenŕe*: to estimate, rate, assess, be of the opinion, judge, reckon. Historically, the title “censor” was first used to designate two magistrates in ancient Rome who were responsible for the census, the official registry of citizens, as well as the supervision of public morals. Censorship was common in both Greece and Rome, but it was not systematically administered until technology extended access to the written word beyond nobles, aristocrats, and clerics. The invention of movable type by Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz, Germany (c. 1450), was followed almost immediately by a papal decree that established and enforced book censorship throughout all of Europe until the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation did not abolish censorship. Protestant reformers such as John Calvin set up far more rigorous censorial regimes than any envisioned by the papacy.

In reaction to what they regarded as the licentious corruptions of the Roman Catholic clergy, Protestants, especially the Puritan sects, instituted far more comprehensive regimens for disciplining the body than had prevailed under Catholicism. In the United States, fundamentalist Protestant groups continue to play leadership roles in organized efforts to prohibit or restrict sex education in public schools, to limit scientific inquiry in areas where science and Scripture conflict, to ban controversial books from public schools and libraries, and to influence textbook selections for public schools.

Women’s Studies, History, and Censorship

From the perspective of women’s studies, the received history of censorship is western, and patriarchal in origin. It recounts a familiar western myth of a progressive, almost oedipal, struggle of the forces of truth, justice, freedom, and enlightenment over tradition, superstition, ignorance, and punitive authority. All the featured players in this story are European men, and virtually all the action revolves around their struggles with one another.

Within this historical narrative, the Reformation marks an epochal triumph for freedom of conscience and reason. The fact that this freedom was achieved within cultures that regarded women, slaves, and servants as property, not as rational human beings, passes without comment. Liberal histories record the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century as narratives of progress. They remain silent about the fact that the franchises for freedom of expression and freedom of the press secured by these revolutions were limited franchises extended only to citizens: free, white males who owned land, or, in the case of freedom of the press, those who owned printing presses, publishing house, or newspapers. These histories chronicle the daring deeds of great men. In short, they suggest that all the significant victories for freedom of expression took place in “a world without women” (Noble, 1992).

From Cato the Elder (234–149 B.C., Roman) to Anthony Comstock (1844–1915, American), the censors vilified in liberal histories of censorship were, to a man, defenders of the morals and manners of patriarchal gender orders. Their adversaries, the champions of free expression, posed no fundamental threats to that order. Indeed, with the exception of John Stuart Mill (1806–1873, British), they expressed little or no awareness of it. On the contrary, almost to a man, they struggled for the ascendancy of their respective political or social causes within the existing gender order. The great egalitarian revolutions of eighteenth-century liberalism were, for example, conceived within natural rights philosophies that understood the rights of *man* to be the rights of *men*.

In this view, the monotheistic, monocular, and monological assumptions of western thought naturalized the subordination of women. These constituent assumptions denied women both subjectivity and agency in historical processes. They provided the auspices for discursive forms that legitimated ignoring or, in the case of some historical writing, erasing women’s participation in struggles for freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Consequently, repression and persecution of heresies like Gnosticism and witchcraft, which disproportionately targeted women, were not classified as censorship by historians. Yet church and state repression directed against these ideas and their advocates claimed more lives than many wars (Kors and Peters, 1972). Conversely, women’s participation in the family-run clandestine presses that sprang up in many parts of Europe from the Inquisition until the French Revolution is not examined in histories of free expression. Yet women’s work was essential to these enterprises, and widows often continued to operate illicit presses long after the death of their husbands.

Standard histories, it is argued, do not just fail to chronicle the experiences of European women. They also ignore the struggles of European men who belonged to subordinate or

nonhegemonic categories of masculinity: homosexual men, landless men, servants, most laborers, and most members of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrant groups. In short, they exclude most of the European population. More significantly, they write all non-Europeans out of history. Liberal history frames its narratives in a periodizing schema—the Dark Ages, the Age of Reason, and so forth—that treats the achievements of prominent European men as universal. Within this schema, the Enlightenment marked the end of the great struggles against censorship. Yet most of the world's population was either disenfranchised or untouched by the "light" of the western Enlightenment.

When the chronology of liberal history is used to tell the stories of women, working-class, colonial, or postcolonial subjects, it reduces their struggles to attempts to amend or complete the received history of censorship. The liberal model ignores the differential social positioning of these people in time, place, and hierarchies of power and knowledge. It captures their resistances within its fictions of universal enlightenment.

The women's history movement abandons these narrative conventions. It treats gender as a primary category of historical analysis. Gender is conceived as a difference that makes a difference in how social order is created and how power relations are arranged, sustained, and contested. Received history is therefore not regarded simply as an incomplete record of the past. Rather, it is seen, for example by Joan Wallach Scott, as an active "participant in the production of knowledge that legitimized the exclusion or subordination of women" (1988:26). The goal of women's history is not just to write women's achievements into the record. It is, Scott, a leader of this movement, points out, to write "histories that focus on women's experiences *and* analyze the ways in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics" (1988:27).

Women's history is only beginning to lay the groundwork for rewriting histories of censorship. It is, nevertheless, possible to identify some of the epistemological moves women's history must make to transcend the myopia of the received history of censorship. Sociological—rather than etymological or juridical—definitions of censorship are required to bring women's experience into focus. Alternative schemata for periodizing history need to be replaced with reflexive, contextual forms that recognize the uniqueness and multiplicity of diverse cultural experiences, discursive practices, and gender orders. Dichotomous concepts, like patriarchy, which provide a useful lens for understanding European experiences, may distort rather than enhance comprehension of the gender politics of nonwestern cultures. Dualistic models do not, for example, advance analysis when applied to some Native American cultures where women are the primary producers of objects of aesthetic value, participate fully in political affairs, and yet play no part in important religious ceremonies.

Viewed from the perspective of women's history, liberal triumphs over church and state censorship require much fuller explanations. Using linear, positivistic theories of progress to theorize these developments greatly underestimates their complexity. These theories ignore the fact that victory within one of the multiple and mobile sets of social relations that make up the field of power is often accompanied by defeat within another (Foucault, 1980). The daring deeds of great men frequently require great sacrifices by their foot soldiers, servants, slaves, mothers, wives, sisters, and children. The free expression of such men often depends on the silence of their subordinates. A step forward in the historical process by some individuals or groups may signal steps backward by others. Women's history requires analysis of all the moves that take place within the field of power.

To cite a paradigmatic example: from the perspectives of standard historiography and women's history, Thomas Jefferson's arguments against censorship assume very different levels of significance. Liberal historians view history as a progressive development that culminates in the Enlightenment, free inquiry, and the rule of reason. Therefore, they regard the internal contradictions in Jefferson's discussions of censorship as inexplicable conundrums and relegate them to the museum of historical curiosities. In contrast, women's history theorizes power as a complex and conflictual process that constitutes the entire social body. As a result, it approaches Jefferson's contradictions as historical discoveries and rich resources for analysis. To bring women's experience of Jeffersonian liberalism into focus requires analysis of the fact that Jefferson vehemently condemned any form of state or local censorship in the American Republic, simultaneously advocating strict censorship of women's reading.

The goal of women's history is not to diminish Jefferson's achievements but to provide a fuller and more accurate account of their complexity. When historians examine the ways that "politics construct gender and gender constructs politics" in liberal democracies, the censorship of women's reading becomes a contradiction that requires explanation because men's reading is no longer subject to censorship. From this perspective, the American Enlightenment can be understood as both a reaffirmation of female subordination and a partial victory for women's struggles for emancipation. Even though it reproduced the

gender order of the Old World, Jeffersonian liberalism also laid some of the philosophical and legal foundations for western feminist critiques of patriarchy.

Constituent and Regulative Censorship

Sociological definitions of censorship recognize the arbitrary, expansive, and fluid character of power relations and of the social structures and hierarchies they support. Two overlapping types of censorship can be distinguished: constituent and regulative (Jansen, 1988; Miller, 1962). Constituent censorship provides the epistemological foundations for the creation of social order and the legitimation of authority. It operates at the level of tacit or taken-for-granted assumptions. Constituent censorship is not ordinarily open to question or contestation except in periods of social tumult or transformation. Yet constituent censorship provides the precedent and anchor for regulative censorships. The gender order—what Gayle Rubin (1975:157) describes as “the sex/gender system”—has served as a form of constituent censorship in virtually all known literate societies. Gender must therefore be understood as a fundamental constituent of all power relations, including the relationships of men with men.

Regulative censorship, by contrast, is generally both “visible and legible” (Sennett, 1980), even though it is often administered in inconsistent, arbitrary, or duplicitous ways. It involves formal, frequently bureaucratic, administration of written laws or rules. Regulative censorship is a legally constituted form of censorship practiced by church or state; it marks the limits of social permission and enforces sanctions against those who cross the boundaries of propriety, canon, or law. Liberal histories of censorship are histories of regulative censorships in the West.

Regulative censorship frequently contributes to the maintenance of the dominant sex or gender system in many cultures. It may, for example, be used variously to ban or restrict access to sexually explicit materials, including images and texts deemed pornographic or obscene; to censor materials that deal with homosexuality or lesbianism; and to restrict access to birth control information. In contemporary liberal democracies, regulation of sexuality has been a flash point for debates about censorship. Debates about regulating pornography framed within the terms of liberal discourse have deeply divided contemporary feminists in Europe and North America.

The distinction between constituent and regulative censorship is useful because it underscores both the intractability and the cultural variability of this suppression. It moves beyond and beneath western liberalism’s circumscribed understanding of the concept. It opens up an approach that can begin to examine the diverse and distinctive ways that nonwestern cultures constitute their discourses and censorship. This approach allows censorship in Argentina, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, or Iran, for example, to be understood and critiqued on its own terms rather than within the terms of an alien screen of meaning that automatically codes difference as regressive, primitive, exotic, or unenlightened.

By emphasizing both the necessity and the difficulty of analyzing constituent forms of censorship, this terminological distinction also provides new ways of conceptualizing, contesting, and mediating current debates about censorship in the West. Groundbreaking works like Susan Griffin’s *Pornography and Silence* (1981) and Carolyn Merchant’s *The Death of Nature* (1980), which document historical repression and erasure of the female principle in the mythopoetics of western thought, acquire new significance. Viewed as probes of constituent censorship in western power and knowledge rather than as specialized studies of pornography or ecology, they begin the work of writing women’s experience into the history of western censorship.

The challenge of rewriting the history of censorship through the lens of women’s experience is a formidable one. A first step is to free the term *censorship* from the hegemony of western legal and semantic traditions. The next step is to develop a radical methodological reflectiveness that incorporates the lessons of both feminist and postcolonial examinations of the constituents of western thought. Then it may be possible to begin to build international forums where the multiple, disparate, and possibly irreconcilable voices of women’s historical and contemporary experiences of censorship can be articulated.

For many women throughout the world, organized struggles for freedom of expression and against censorship are just beginning to gain momentum. These women are claiming a voice and making history in places like Dakar, Dublin, Lagos, Ljubljana, Los Angeles, Manchester, Manila, Phnom Penh, Santiago, and Tashkent. As historical subjects and agents, they are reconstructing gender, politics, and definitions of free expression.

See Also

DEMOCRACY; EROTICA; EUROCENTRISM; HUMAN RIGHTS; LITERATURE: OVERVIEW; PATRIARCHY: FEMINIST THEORY; PORNOGRAPHY IN ART AND LITERATURE; PUBLISHING; REPRESENTATION

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CENSUS

Throughout recorded history, elites and governments have conducted censuses as a means of keeping track of the material resources that they have owned or controlled (or have wished to own and control) within their borders. Most early censuses were conducted to enumerate the wealth and resources of the state for the purpose of assessing taxes and tributes due. Modern national censuses still provide economic information, but most states today conduct censuses primarily for broader social science purposes: the census, in most countries, is the main (often sole) document that aims to provide a comprehensive social survey of the nation. The most basic social census is designed to elicit information on the sex, age, marital status, family size, educational attainment, and economic status of each person enumerated; most national censuses go much further and include questions on health, welfare, housing conditions, consumption patterns, religious preference, and racial identity.

Conducting a regular census is considered a hallmark—and an obligation—of modern statehood; the United Nations issues guidelines on developing and conducting censuses. A decennial census (taken every 10 years) has become the international standard, but the ability of states to conduct regular censuses varies widely. A complex and costly infrastructure is required to conduct and interpret a national census, and in many poorer countries censuses are taken infrequently. On a global scale, then, the level of information available about the social and economic lives of women and men is wildly uneven; as a general rule, one can presume that the least information—or the least reliable information—is available for the poorest and more marginalized peoples and nations.

Uses of the Census

In many countries, the census is key to national government decision making—it is the primary document that provides the “factual” basis for a wide range of social, economic, and political policies. Most censuses are intended to be comprehensive social surveys, and most demographers, policy makers, and analysts who interpret census information have long assumed that this is what censuses provide. Recent critiques from social scientists, however, including feminists, particularly in western countries where census taking is a high-profile and high-expense government activity, have called into question presumptions about the comprehensiveness of modern censuses. It is increasingly clear that censuses provide, at best, a partial assessment of the “state of the state.” It also is clear that the degree to which certain groups are rendered visible or invisible in a census will have important consequences in social and economic policy.

In some cases, certain peoples and groups may actively avoid being counted in national censuses; censuses are,