



Sex, Literature and Censorship

Jonathan Dollimore

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Those who love and live by art, tell us that it is the most exalted expression of civilized life. In this provocative new book Jonathan Dollimore argues that, far from confirming humane values, literature more often than not violates them.

He begins with a polemical and witty attack on the spurious radicalism of some fashionable academic theories about desire and sexual dissidence. Dollimore then examines the ways in which the media, literary critics and the state, as well as these literary theorists, all deny or repress the disturbing and dangerous knowledge conveyed by literature.

His own account of the volatile connections between aesthetics, desire, politics and censorship unfolds through topics such as homosexuality, bisexuality, sexual disgust, and the disturbing relations between art and inhumanity, and through brilliant insights into a wide range of authors including Euripides, Shakespeare, Tennyson and Yeats.

Most persistently, this book is about how the experience of desire in life and art compromises our most cherished ethical beliefs. If this helps make art irresistible and of indispensable value, it follows too that there are reasonable grounds for wanting to censor it.

This compelling and accessibly written book will be essential reading for students and scholars of literary, gender and cultural studies, and will have a major impact on debates about art, sexuality, censorship and the role of the intellectual.

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