

The significance of the case went beyond the victory of one bookseller. Although the presiding Court of Appeals Judge William S. Andrews acknowledged that the novel “contains many paragraphs, however, which taken by themselves are undoubtedly vulgar and indecent,” he based his decision on the “whole book” concept and provided more specific criteria to strengthen the defense:

No work may be judged from a selection of paragraphs alone. Printed by themselves they might, as a matter of law, come within the prohibition of the statute. So might a similar selection from Aristophanes or Chaucer or Boccaccio or even from the Bible. The book, however, must be considered broadly as a whole.

Dissenting Judges J. Crane and J. Hogan wrote that the book “counsels vice” and attempts “to impress upon the readers that vice and voluptuousness are natural to society, are not wrongs but proper practices to be indulged in by the young.” They noted that if the activities in the book were expressed in the “language of the street, there would be no doubt in the minds of anybody that the work would be lewd, vicious and indecent.” Moreover, the “polished style with exquisite settings and perfumed words makes it all the more dangerous and insidious and none the less obscene and lascivious.”

FURTHER READING

- Cusseres, Benjamin de. “Case of Prudery against Literature: Attack on Gautier’s Novel Brings to Mind Many Historical Examples of Law’s Moral Censorship of Books.” *New York Times*, May 23, 1920, p. 3.
- Marchand, Henry. *The French Pornographers: Including a History of French Erotic Literature*. New York: Book Awards, 1965.
- Nelson, Hilda. “Theophile Gautier: The Invisible and Impalpable World.” *French Review* 45 (June 1972): 819–30.

THE MAID OF ORLEANS (LA PUCELLE)

Author: François-Marie Arouet (Voltaire)

Original dates and places of publication: 1759, France; 1901, United States

Original publishers: Privately printed (France); E. R. Du Mont (United States)

Literary form: Satire

SUMMARY

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THE MAID OF ORLEANS

The disgusted nobleman St. Denis vows that “every wrong is righted by its opposite,” and he looks for a virgin who can lead France to victory, despite the skepticism of other nobles who doubt that any virgins remain in France. When he finds Joan of Arc, many comment that “the key to France’s salvation lies under her skirt,” and many attempt to violate her chastity. She does come close to surrendering to Dunois, but she stops their lovemaking just in time to prevent defloration:

“Beloved bastard,” she cried, “do stop. Now is not the right time. Heaven knows of our love, so let us not ruin our future. To you alone I pledge my troth. I swear that you shall have my flower. But let us wait until your avenging arm has conquered the Briton and driven out the usurper. Then we shall lie together under our laurels.”

After victory on the battlefield, Joan keeps her promise to Dunois.

Voltaire allows Joan her chastity, but the other characters in the satire show distinctly immoral behavior. The king’s mistress is licentious, and her charms are described in detail. Voltaire observes:

Below a neck whiter than alabaster were two separate mounds, shapely, stirring and throbbing, rounded by Eros, and tipped with little buttons of rose. Oh, charming, palpitating breasts, you invited the hand to squeeze, the eye to marvel, and the mouth to kiss.

At one point, King Charles surprises Agnes with a naked young page, Monrose, who is described as having “displayed a rear like that which Caesar in his youth shamelessly proffered to Nicodemus, that portion of the anatomy for which valiant warriors, alas, have such a weakness.”

The author makes other graphic observations. He states that Robert d’Abriselle liked to lie “between two big-bottomed nuns, to caress four chubby hemispheres and fondle an equal number of breasts, and all that without sinning.” In other incidents, an English chaplain sexually assaults Agnes Sorel, and the English king turns over a “mother and daughter to his soldiers.”

CENSORSHIP HISTORY

The Maid of Orleans became the object of a legal action in 1909 when a man who had ordered the 42-volume set of Voltaire’s works refused to honor the contract and pay \$200 for the set. Peter J. Quinn’s claim that *The Maid of Orleans* and the *PHILOSOPHICAL DICTIONARY* were immoral made this the first case in which a person buying the book for personal use became a litigant in a literary obscenity case. The case went before the Ne
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In an appeal to the Supreme Court of New York, the decision was reversed in *St. Hubert Guild v. Quinn*, 64 Misc. 336, 118 N.Y.S. 582 (Sup. Ct. 1909). In his decision, Judge J. Seabury, with Judges Gildersleeve and Giegerich concurring, asserted, "The rule against the sale of immoral publications cannot be invoked against those works which have been generally recognized as literary classics." Seabury added that "the question in a given case is not simply whether the publication be immoral, but whether it is sufficiently so to enable the criminal law to punish it as such." In ruling on *The Maid of Orleans*, he decided that the book in question was not sufficiently immoral.

FURTHER READING

De Grazia, Edward. *Censorship Landmarks*. New York: Bowker, 1969.

Lewis, Felice Flanery. *Literature, Obscenity, and Law*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1976.

Wellek, Rene, and Austin Warren. *Theory of Literature*. 3d ed. New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1956.

MEMOIRES

Author: Giovanni Casanova de Seingalt

Original dates and places of publication: 1826, Germany; 1922, England

Original publishers: Brockhaus (Germany); The Casanova Society (England)

Literary form: Autobiography

SUMMARY

Casanova's *Memoires*, originally titled *Memoires: Ecrites par lui-meme*, is the world's most famous erotic autobiography. As researchers of sexual behavior Eberhard and Phyllis Kronhausen point out, the work also provides "one of the most important sources for the cultural historian, and especially for the student of sexual customs, the psychologist, and the sexologist."

Throughout the work, Casanova reports in detail a wide and varied range of sexual experiences, and he also reveals important social information regarding contraception and the sexual customs of different classes. In one incident, Casanova and an agent who has procured the sexual services of three beautiful young girls have dinner, drink champagne, and then settle down to an amorous evening. The agent takes from his pocket a condom, "this admirable preservative from an accident which might give rise to a terrible and fruitless repentance." The girls are familiar with the item, and "they laughed heartily to see the shape these articles took when they were blown out." In

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He relates experiences in which various girls undress completely, allowing him to rhapsodize in detail about their naked bodies, particularly their breasts and buttocks, and then make his “bliss complete by presenting me with their maidenheads.”

In one instance, Casanova meets a nun who has recently given birth in secret and who joins him in “exhausting all imaginable kinds of pleasure, exciting each other’s desires, and only wishing to prolong our enjoyment.” Remembering her earlier pregnancy, the next time they engage in sexual intercourse Casanova uses “a little article of transparent skin, about eight inches long, with one opening, which was ornamented with a red rosette . . . this preventive sheath.” In another instance, he reports unlacing the corset of a young novice, “and affixing my lips to one of the blossoms of her breasts I sucked it with a voluptuous pleasure which is beyond all description.” Afterward, he expresses the great pleasure that he has enjoyed, and she responds that it is no sin for her because it “will easily be wiped out with a little holy water. At all events we can swear that there has been no kissing between us.”

Defenders of the work point out that beyond documenting the sexual adventures of a libertine, *Memoires* relates his attraction to a highly pregnant woman and gives details regarding the delivery of a baby and other realistic, antierotic material “which any pornographer worthy of the name would never introduce into his story.”

CENSORSHIP HISTORY

Casanova’s *Memoires* were published in highly expurgated form in 1826, but the complete work did not appear until 1922. The manuscript remained in the safe of the publisher until the moral climate appeared to have changed sufficiently to allow publication of the entire work. Even in expurgated form, the work created controversy. In 1834, the entire 12-volume set of the expurgated *Memoires* was placed on the Index librorum prohibitorum in Rome, where it remained until the dissolution of the Index in the 1960s. In 1863, the French government banned sales of the work without protest from booksellers or distributors. In 1929, United States Customs confiscated a shipment of books containing *Memoires* and other erotic classics, but the court refused to hear the case, so the books were released.

On September 20, 1932, a prohibition order was published in the *Iris Oifigiuil*, “the only official source from which booksellers [and readers] might learn of a new prohibition order,” in which all articles blacklisted by the Irish Board of Censors were listed. According to the Censorship of Publications Bill of 1928, “the notice in *Iris Oifigiuil* should be sufficient evidence in the courts of summary jurisdiction as to the character of the publication.” despite the acknowledgment by justices quoted in Adams’s

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An edition of *La pucelle, the maid of Orléans* (1899). *La pucelle, the maid of Orléans*. an heroic-comical poem in twenty-one cantos. A new and complete translation into English verse, rev., corr., and augm. from the earlier English translation of W.H. Ireland and the one attributed to Lady Charleville, with the variants, now for the first time translated by Ernest Dowson by Voltaire. 0 Ratings. *The Maid of Orleans* is an opera in 4 acts, 6 scenes, by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. It was composed during 1878–1879 to a Russian libretto by the composer, based on several sources: Friedrich Schiller's *The Maid of Orleans* as translated by Vasily Zhukovsky; Jules Barbier's *Jeanne d'Arc*; Auguste Mermet's libretto for his own 1876 opera; and Henri Wallon's biography of Joan of Arc. Dedicated to conductor Eduard Nájpravník, this work represents the composer's closest approach to French grand opera, albeit *The Maid of Orleans* (French: *La Pucelle d'Orléans*) is a satirical poem by François-Marie Arouet, better known by his pen name, Voltaire. It was first published in 1899, but Voltaire had written it over a century beforehand; while he had started writing the text in 1730, he never completed it. It was translated into English by W. H. Ireland. Voltaire was undoubtedly one of the most controversial writers and philosophers of the Enlightenment Age, and *The Maid of Orleans* was also certainly one of his