

## **Sex education in eighteenth-century France**

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Did 'sex education' actually exist in eighteenth-century France? Shaped by competing currents of religious dogma, atheist materialism and bourgeois morality, eighteenth-century France marked the beginning of what Michel Foucault called 'une fermentation discursive' on matters related to sex. But when we consult the educational theorists or *philosophes* of the time for their opinions on preparing a young person for life as a sexual being, we are met with a telling silence. Did an Enlightenment era that dared to make sex an object of discourse also dare to make it an object of pedagogy?

*Sex education in eighteenth-century France* brings together specialists from a range of disciplines to address these issues. Using a wide variety of literary, historical, religious and pedagogical sources, contributors explore for the first time the nexus between sex and instruction. Although these two categories were *publicly* kept distinct, writers were effectively shaping attitudes and behaviours. Unraveling the complex system of rules and codes through which knowledge about sex was communicated, contributors uncover a new dimension in the practice of education in the eighteenth century.

Shane Agin, Introduction: sex education in eighteenth-century France

### I. Regulation

Jean Bloch, Perdution, degeneration or legitimate pleasure? Eighteenth-century French education and the subject of sex

Allan H. Pasco, Miss Manners and fooling around: conduct manuals and sexual mores in eighteenth-century France

Paul Scott, Rites of wrong: confessors' manuals and sins of the flesh in eighteenth-century

France

Kathryn A. Hoffmann, Curing masturbation with a bath, a straitjacket or a wax museum: the strategies of Tissot, Bienville and Bertrand-Rival

## II. Reflection and evaluation

Jean M. Goulemot, Sex education in early modern utopian literature: an investigation into the margins

Matthew Lauzon, Dangerous educations and factitious puberties: the enlightening lessons of foreign love

Shane Agin, The construction and education of the sexualised subject in Rousseau

Cecilia Feilla, Correspondence school for lovers: epistolary exchange and sexual education in Restif de la Bretonne's *Le Nouvel Abeilard*

## III. Narratives of education, initiation and discovery

Didier Masseur, Representations of sexual awakening in eighteenth-century memoirs

Chris Roulston, Female education and sex education in Choderlos de Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses*

Jean-Christophe Abramovici, The comedy of ignorance: scenes of sexual initiation in early modern pornographic literature

Juliette Cherbuliez, The science of seduction: libertinism's privileged spheres of knowing

James Grantham Turner, Sexual awakening as radical Enlightenment: arousal and ontogeny in Buffon and La Mettrie

Summaries

Bibliography

Index

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## French Review

This well-structured book has three sections, each examining contributions to sex education in a different domain. It guides readers through its topic like a pyramid, with a comprehensive foundation followed by an ever more narrow focus in subsequent sections.

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