

Introduction

Sex Talks

Libertine Texts and Erotic Philosophies

. . . secret *whoredom*, *self pollution*, speculative *wantonness*, men with *men*, women with *women*, as the Apostle speaks, *Rom.* 1. At this day, all the world shall see and hear these privy pranks, then the Books shall be opened.

(Thomas Shepard, *The Sincere Convert* (1664), 58)

I was a sort of philosophick libertine, and pursued pleasure for the sake of demonstration; I paused, I reasoned, I made critical reflections on every enjoyment; I proposed something beyond gratifying a low and sensual inclination; mine was a deliberate search after happiness.

(Elisabeth Singer Rowe)

Two scenes of reading define the scope and material of this book. Discovered in the most famous memoirs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they frame my enquiry into the educational and philosophical implications of libertine literature, and identify the texts that I will read most closely in the following chapters: *L'Escole des filles, ou La Philosophie des dames* (1655) and *Aloisiae Sigae Satyra Sotadica de Arcanis Amoris et Veneris* (c.1660). Though the publication-history of these erotic dialogues was established decades ago by the great bibliographer David Foxon, his call for a deeper study of the 'intellectualization' of sexuality in the mid-seventeenth century¹ has gone largely unanswered, despite the vast surge of interest in the 'discourse of sexuality' provoked by Michel Foucault's *Volonté de savoir* and by feminist critiques of pornography. *Schooling Sex* attempts to answer that call, and in particular to enquire why the idea of female education—the conjunction of *école* and *filles*, *philosophie* and *dames*—should generate such a frenzy of composition.

The first scene is by now the most familiar episode in the history of what Lynn Hunt calls the 'invention of pornography'. On the morning of Sunday, 9 February 1668, Samuel Pepys appears to have been in two places at once: 'Up, and at my chamber all the morning and the office, doing business and also reading a little of *L'escolle des Filles*.' His entanglement with this quintessential libertine text—'a mighty lewd book, but yet not amiss for a sober man once to read over to inform himself in the

¹ Preface, n. 5 above; for Foxon's *Libertine Literature*, Pepys's diary, and other frequently cited texts, see Abbreviations above.

villainy of the world’—had begun in a more public setting, a respectable bookshop in the Strand. Expecting an urbane French conduct book to share with his wife, he began browsing but discovered it to be ‘the most bawdy, lewd book that I ever saw, rather worse than *putana errante*—so that I was ashamed of reading in it’ (13 Jan. 1668). Nevertheless, he returned a third time four weeks later to ‘that idle, roguish book, *L’escholle des Filles*, buying it surreptitiously ‘in plain binding’ (8 Feb.), and on the following Lord’s Day he took his pleasure of it in full, starting in the morning while simultaneously doing ‘business’ in his home office, finishing it the same night after a day of music-making with friends:

We sang till almost night, and drank my good store of wine; and then they parted and I to my chamber, where I did read through *L’escholle des Filles*; a lewd book, but what doth me no wrong to read for information sake (but it did hazer my prick para stand all the while, and una vez to decharger); and after I had done it, I burned it, that it might not be among my books to my shame; and so at night to supper and then to bed. (9 Feb. 1668)

Like many other historians of sexuality I will take my cue from this now-famous passage, where Pepys splits himself into a ‘sober man’ and a priapic rogue, and assures us repeatedly that his object is ‘to inform himself’. I will concentrate more on the French text than on Pepys, but I will bring to libertine literature questions derived from its reception-history: what representations of sex as discipline, what opportunities to ‘school’ or ‘inform himself’, did Pepys find in this ‘*escholle des Filles*’ or ‘School for Girls’, which he stalked, captured, and devoured with such intense arousal and shame?

Throughout this bibliophilic affair Pepys sees the book as a lively quasi-human agent, shuttling between active and passive, subject-formation and object-lesson. Like the ‘lascivious’ books banned by the Council of Trent (Ch. 1 n. 84 below), the ‘mighty lewd book’ actively ‘teaches’ rather than merely presenting or narrating. *L’Ecole des filles* is not just a text that must be ‘read with one hand’—as Rousseau reported a lady friend saying—but a text that pursues the reader, that ‘makes him discharge’, that forces him to define reading as a dirty deed (‘after I had done it, I burned it’). Such a book actively ‘disgraces’ and ‘shames’ the company it keeps. When Pepys tries to place *L’Ecole* in a conceptual library, he imagines it as a strolling adventuress or ‘wandering whore’ (‘rather worse than *putana errante*’) scandalously intruding into the orderly, well-bound, official collection that will carry his image into history: he resolves to buy it in plain wrapper, and to burn it the moment after enjoyment, so ‘that it may not *stand* in the list of books, nor among them, to disgrace *them* if it should be found’ (8 Feb. 1668, my emphasis). ‘Stand’ is precisely the word he uses for his own erection the following evening, as he reads the libertine text by the fireside. Paradoxically this book about female sexuality—the dialogue of the ingénue and her young married cousin, initiating her into the ‘facts of life’ and the pleasures of adultery—invades Pepys with what Donne called a ‘masculine persuasive force’,² experienced as a quality of the text rather than the reader. If this school of *filles* can ‘stand’ as well as give him pleasure, then it ‘informs’ by a kind of active penetration.

² Elegy XVI, ‘On his Mistris’, line 4.

L'Escole allows Pepys to enjoy a kind of sex without owing to a sexual relationship. In the act of writing up his response he can preserve the memory and file it away, evoking it and distancing it, categorizing and controlling it according to its literary genre. Even before reading *L'Escole*, its innocuous title and frontispiece (Fig. 4 below) had made Pepys speculate about the kind of book it might be and the kind of 'school' it might create; he had already placed it in an imaginary scene of domestic industry and mutual enlightenment, since he first identifies it as 'the French book which I did think to have had for my wife to translate' (13 Jan. 1668). To weave themselves common interests, the Anglo-French couple had been reading *Le Grand Cyrus* together (in English), luxuriating in Madeleine de Scudéry's vision of educative community under female leadership; Pepys clearly hoped that *L'Escole* would extend this cultural project. After discovering its genital content and shameless philosophy of female hedonism, he switches to a different didactic tradition—the Italian 'pornographic' canon that I explore in the earlier chapters of this book. When he declares it 'rather worse than *putana errante*', we see him expertly gauging the French book according to its power to arouse and its relation to previous authorities; *La puttana errante* was a sixteenth-century dialogue of courtesan instruction, recently republished and passing as an authentic work by the celebrated Pietro Aretino, gathering and codifying every known sexual posture. Now Pepys extends the calibrating, mapping process to the new libertine text, using this *Wandering Whore* as the standard to measure its 'badness'.

I propose to take the teaching, 'informing' role of early modern erotic discourse seriously, not by endorsing its liberating message or comparing it to more recent pornography, but by confronting 'bad' texts like *L'Escole des filles* with the educational theories and practices of their own period. Critical readings of this passage in Pepys have tended to emphasize the inadequacy of the didactic claim, the secrecy of the writing, the 'tremulous' and 'private' corporeality manifested in what is often read as the first authentic account of the male response to pornography. Historians of French culture give this fragment of English diary a privileged place in a 'history of private life' otherwise almost entirely Gallic; as if it exemplifies the Foucauldian episteme in action, Pepys's embrace of *L'Escole* becomes an originary moment, a sudden eruption of modernity.³ Scholars of England paint a grimmer picture. Roger Thompson finds Pepys's account 'profoundly inhibited and uncomfortable, . . . tantalised, drunkenly horrified',⁴ while Bridget Orr relates it to 'anxiety about regulating female discourse' (plausibly linked to the emergence of women writers in England), as well as to the critique of pornography and the 'origins of the scopie

³ Cf. Roger Chartier in vol. iii of *Histoire de la vie privée, De la Renaissance aux Lumières*, ed. Chartier, tr. Arthur Goldhammer as *A History of Private Life*, iii: *Passions of the Renaissance* (1989), 143–4; Keith Thomas, 'Behind Closed Doors', *New York Review of Books*, 9 Nov. 1989, 18; Joan DeJean, 'The Politics of Pornography: *L'École des Filles*', in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500–1800* (New York, 1993), 110.

⁴ *Unfit for Modest Ears: A Study of Pornographic, Obscene and Bawdy Works Written or Published in England in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century* (1979), 210 (cited in turn by Roy Porter and Lesley Hall in *The Facts of Life: The Creation of Sexual Knowledge in Britain, 1650–1950* (1995), 18 (and for the *Escole* passage cf. 91).

regimes of modernity'.⁵ Francis Barker, determined to impose a nineteenth-century model of the repressed 'bourgeois', finds the utmost significance in 'the guilty sexuality which the passage takes such pains not to speak'.⁶ Far from falling silent, however, we have seen that Pepys explicitly records in racy Franco-SpanGLISH that *L'Escole des filles* 'caused my prick to stand all the while, and to ejaculate once' (*una vez to decharger*).⁷

Looking more closely, we can see that the phrasing and even the orthography of this notorious diary entry play a complex, teasing game of secrecy and display. Like the Parmesan cheese Pepys buried during the Great Fire, the sexual allusions are concealed in order to be found and relished again. In the passage describing his arousal the faltering syntax encloses his sex in a double binder, a parenthetical 'but' clause nesting inside another 'but' clause. It is encoded, first by the shorthand, then by the lingua franca of European vocabulary, and then by the schoolboyish habit of adding nonsense-syllables to certain words; thus he turns *belly* into 'benleri', *did* into the prosthetic 'dild', and *pleasure* into 'plelesonure', putting the lesson back into it. When Pepys's pen came to record his adventures with *L'Escole* it wrote, not the bold 'prick', but the bashful 'primick'.⁸ Yet this encryption never inhibits the flow of Pepys's sexual discourse, and the codes themselves prove quite legible, the French and Spanish words easily accessible. As Fig. 1 shows clearly, the key words 'L'escholles des Filles' and 'decharger' are written in longhand, and blaze forth from the page of shorthand. Rather than concealing, Pepys's polyglottism adds colour and worldly sophistication, injecting a self-conscious and performative tone into the private space of the diary. Here as elsewhere, his linguistic practices bring Court culture and European geography into the microcosm of the body.⁹ Pepys would be surprised to learn that he had 'banished' sex to a 'secluded domain, . . . a silent bedroom'.¹⁰ Sex talks. But for Pepys and others it talks in an excited babble of immigrant tongues: in his libertine novel *Les Bijoux indiscrets* Diderot slips into English to describe the sexual exploits of a coarse but vigorous sea captain; conversely, the Clerk of the Royal Navy uses Mediterranean languages to describe the warmer regions of his body. He does not 'deny' his sex, as Barker insists, but dresses it up, with a baguette under its arm and a little sombrero on its head.

Schooling Sex follows this hint in Pepys by exploring the intersection of formative texts and articulate readers in Latin, Italian, French, and English. Chapter 1 starts by

⁵ 'The Feminine in Restoration Erotica', in Clare Brant and Diane Purkiss (eds.), *Women, Texts and Histories, 1575–1760* (1992), 199.

⁶ *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays in Subjection* (1984), 62; Barker uses not the diary itself but a doubly censored text, a selection made for schoolchildren from the prudish Victorian edition (which I recall as an English O-Level text in 1960, my first encounter with this passage). Bowdlerized versions still circulate, e.g. in the sound recording read by Kenneth Branagh and in the French translation by Renée Villoteau, *Journal* (Paris, 1987), 389.

⁷ Words that have now been quoted in the most venerable journals, e.g. *TLS* 13 Jan. 1995, 15 (letter from Michael Paffard).

⁸ I am grateful to Dr Richard Lockett, Pepys Librarian, Magdalene College, Cambridge, for advice on transcription; for a specimen of garbling, see note to 31 May 1667.

⁹ Cf. p. 13 below (Italian proverb about Charles II's *cazzo*) and my 'Pepys and the Private Parts of Monarchy', in Gerald MacLean (ed.), *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration: Literature, Drama, History* (Cambridge, 1995), 98.

¹⁰ Barker, *Tremulous Private Body*, 2.

1. Samuel Pepys's diary for 9 February 1668

pondering Montaigne's concept of sexual knowledge as a 'discipline born in the blood' as well as learned from books, and subsequent readings will sample all the relevant 'disciplines'—a term I take to mean an organized body of knowledge as well as a punitive technique. The discourse of sexuality comprises theology and canon law, the philosophy of mind and body, medical teachings on generation and its discontents, as well as those pedagogic texts that raise the question of gender, like Jan Amos Comenius' *Magna Didactica* or the many debates over *l'éducation des filles*. The centre of each chapter, however, will remain those books like *L'Escole des filles* for which 'pornography' would be an understandable anachronism. Except when talking literally of *pornographia*—the graphic representation of prostitutes studied in my previous book *Libertines and Radicals*—I would rather identify these sixteenth- and seventeenth-century texts as 'explicit' or 'hard-core'. In early modern terms these books are categorizable as 'mighty lewd', or in Montaigne's phrase 'impertinently genital in their approaches'—a term that applies both to the adventures of his youth and to the arousing texts he studies in old age, which remain firm and 'masculine' when he himself has grown soft.¹¹ This crude anatomical 'impertinence' places them beyond the pale and guarantees their circulation in a clandestine economy: Pepys might have called *L'Escole des filles* an 'idle, roguish book' (an indulgent

¹¹ *Essais*, III, v, cited in Patricia Parker, 'Virile Style', in Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero with Kathy Lavezzo (eds.), *Premodern Sexualities* (1996), 211.

half-condemnation at most), but he still consigned it to the flames; in France both author and text are sentenced to burning for offences ‘against the honour of God and the Church, and quite contrary to good morals and Christian discipline’, and in England the bookseller is indicted for publishing a ‘nequissimum scandalosum vitiosum et illicitum librum’, horribly corrupting the young male subjects of Charles II.¹²

This ‘corruption’ involves more than the mere intention to arouse, which in some circles constitutes the definition of pornography. Quite apart from the naive intentionality of such a definition, arousal is an ephemeral phenomenon that scarcely endures a second, critical reading. Pepys only managed ‘una vez to decharger’, and then pitched *L’Escole* into the fire; all the texts analysed below survive because they were detained for further questioning, either in gentlemen’s libraries or in prosecutors’ records. Textual arousal may lead to nefarious acts, as the enemies of pornography insist, but in Pepys’s case the crime was book-burning rather than rape. In this period arousal did not constitute scandal *per se* or contravene the essence of literature as understood in late Renaissance theory: as we shall see in Chapter 2, on Ferrante Pallavicino’s 1642 *Retorica delle puttane* (or ‘Whores’ Rhetoric’), all the liberal arts aimed to stir the passions of the beholder, and—as Horace insisted—the author or narrator must seem to experience the passion herself. The danger of these books for the seventeenth-century reader like Pepys, and their interest in the twenty-first century, lies in their capacity to confuse boundaries, to introduce foreign bodies, to associate polymorphous language and sexual practice, and to organize this Babel under a libertine-hedonist philosophy ‘contrary to good morals and Christian discipline’—in short, to form an erotic-didactic counter-discipline.

My second example of ‘impertinently genital’ reading takes place early in the following century. The 11-year-old Giacomo Casanova sits at the dinner table, eager to prove himself in the company of five auspicious adults: his patron, his tutor, his mother, an English man of letters, and the aristocratic rake-poet Giorgio Baffo, a ‘sublime genius . . . in the most lubricious of genres.’¹³ The Englishman initiates a conversation that resembles Baffo’s sonnets in being at once decorous in form and priapic in content. To test the boy’s educational progress, he asks him to expound a famous couplet by the sixteenth-century poet Johannes Secundus, on the distribution of power in sex and language:

Discite grammatici cur masculina nomina cunnus
Et cur femineum mentula nomen habet.¹⁴

Tell me, grammarians, why [in Latin] *cunt* is a masculine noun and *prick* is a feminine noun.

He thus flaunts the names of the genitals in the face of a cleric, a minor, and a widowed matron, relying on her presumed ignorance of Latin to create an intimate

¹² Ch. 3 n. 13 below; *The School of Venus*, Middx. prosecution (see Abbreviations above).

¹³ Jacques Casanova de Seingalt, *Histoire de ma vie*, Édition intégrale, i (Wiesbaden, 1960), 9.

¹⁴ For the whole epigram, see Secundus’ *Opera*, ed. Petrus Scriverus (Leiden, 1619), 141; in the original, the *cunnus* achieves masculine status because it can perform ‘indefatigably’ and ‘endlessly’.

circle of masculine initiates, fellow-sharers in a tradition of literate eroticism and 'lascivious erudition' stretching back to the Renaissance. As in the sexual joking analysed by Freud, the woman is both evoked and excluded—though Baffo did ease the situation by whispering the true meaning into the mother's ear. Paradoxically, however, this triumph of masculine wit raises questions about precisely what it seeks to confirm: male supremacy and the congruence of language and sexuality. Casanova's improvised answer—which inspired the English visitor to shower him with warm embraces and a pocket-watch—declares (in metrical Latin) that *cunnius* is masculine because the masculine gender must always be assigned to the dominant party: 'the slave must always bear the master's name' (22–3).

How did Casanova acquire this literary-erotic expertise, this knowledge that allowed him to promote his own sex even while declaring the absolute dominion of the female? The tutor assumes, naively, that his pupil has displayed a purely philological skill, all the more brilliant because innocent of sexual knowledge. But Casanova did in fact know the subject matter, at least 'in theory, . . . having already read Meursius, in secret, precisely because he had forbidden it me'. Didactic discipline generates its own opposite. Casanova's tutor obediently follows the dictate of the Council of Trent, which allowed adults to read 'elegant' classical erotica but insisted that 'they must not be read by boys for any reason'; the teacher identifies his rival, the 'book that teaches lascivious matters', in the very act of prohibiting it.¹⁵ The precocious 'boy'—on the threshold of adolescence and already the object of the Englishman's leading questions—has read a book that confers a complete theoretical knowledge of sex, a book which would be so familiar to the presumed reader that a single word can explain the whole matter: 'Meursius'.

Casanova was quite typical in assuming that the forbidden work of 'Meursius' (also ascribed to 'Aloisia Sigea') would give him a 'theoretical' grasp of the entire sexual realm. (Part II will trace the complex reception-history of this high-libertine text, its evocation as touchstone of elegance and *ne plus ultra* of immorality.) Even more than *L'Escole des filles*, this encyclopedic work achieved a classic status which allowed it to be cited in Enlightenment narratives of subject-formation. In Diderot's *Bijoux indiscrets*, for example, the courtier Sélim describes how he passed through various educational stages meant to be typical of an aristocratic youth, each stage associated with a particular kind of text. His first erotic experience, like Gargantua's in Rabelais or the future Louis XIII's at the French court, is created by the nursemaids who fondle and 'take liberties' with him; he then enters the male world by studying the classics of Greek and Roman erotica with his tutors; next he learns various masturbatory 'gentillesses de collègue' from his father's pages; and finally 'reading *Aloysia*, which the pages lent me, gave me every possible inclination to perfect myself. I was then fourteen.'¹⁶

¹⁵ H. J. Schoeder (ed.), *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* (1941), 548; by Casanova's time Chorier's work hid under the textbook title *Joanni Meursii Elegantiae Latini Sermone*, which echoes the Council's permission to read 'lascivious and obscene' classics *propter sermonis elegantiam*.

¹⁶ *Ceuvres*, ed. André Billy, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, 1951), 177 (ch. 44); for Diderot's proposal of a bust in honour of 'Meursius', see my Epilogue.

Casanova and Sélim were formed by the same book, Nicolas Chorier's *Satyra Sotadica* (subtitled 'On the Arcana of Love and Venus'), supposedly written by a woman intellectual of the sixteenth century, Aloisia or Luisa Sigea of Toledo, and then allegedly translated from Spanish to Latin by the Dutch scholar Johannes Meursius. 'Aloisia' and 'Meursius' both serve to identify this double-authored work, female in content and Latin in form. In Casanova and in Diderot, homoeroticism and the sharing of the text comprise equivalent and successive stages in masculine initiation: at the dinner table the Englishman and the schoolboy embrace over 'Meursius'; in the 'college' below stairs, the male servants and their young master enjoy each other with 'Aloisia', not now in élite Latin but in the translation *L'Académie des dames*—an ironic title since it is boys and not 'ladies' who use it as their school. Unlike Pepys, who reads in solitude 'to inform himself in the villainy of the world' and who ends by ejaculating and burning the book, these Italian and French readers enjoy their textually provoked eroticism collectively and then proceed to model their lives on the expanded sexual possibilities represented in the pages of 'Aloisia'. The book of sex thus provides both the stimulus and the means 'de se perfectionner', to complete the self-fashioning of the courtly seducer, the *honnête homme*, the heroic libertine.

What *would* the adventurous young man have found in this classic treatise on the 'Secrets of Love and Venus'? Paradoxically, the book that mothers must not see concerns female rather than male sexual awakening, the 'free' discourse of women passing those secrets among themselves and thereby forming the sexuality of the younger generation. As we shall see in Chapters 3 and 4, Chorier's *Aloisia Sigea* builds upon but transcends the form of *L'Escole des filles*, for which critics have coined the unwieldy but accurate term 'pseudofeminocentric'. A series of dialogues between Octavia and her older cousin Tullia begins with the simplest description of the genitals and proceeds, in good didactic fashion, through all the complications of lesbian, marital, and extramarital sex; Octavia may be tongue-tied and ignorant at the beginning, and the earlier dialogues may take place wholly within the marriage-bed, but by the end she finds herself describing incredibly complex perversions in a tone of sophisticated philosophical appreciation. Obviously these enlightened and autonomous 'women' have been fabricated by a male author for a male readership; as in Casanova's dinner conversation, text and reader form a mutual masturbatory circle, playing with their models of the *cunnus* in front of a mother who must stay out of the picture. But the puppets disobey. Narrative authority is gendered female, libertine mothers take command, men appear more as objects than subjects, and the phallus, at first a 'sceptre', 'sword', or 'battering ram', becomes sometimes a 'female slave', sometimes a 'queen', 'heroine', or 'empress'—extending the grammatical conundrum set up by Secundus. Indeed, the Latin text has already rehearsed the Secundus connection and schooled Casanova in his impromptu answer: the lines quoted by the Englishman, articulating the paradox of 'masculine' cunt and 'feminine' prick, are printed as a colophon in all editions of Chorier's work. One translation of *L'Escole des filles* even blazoned them on the title page—an epigraph not only

suggesting the élite appeal of Latinity but defining the quintessence of what the reader might learn in *The School for Girls* or *The Ladies' Academy*.¹⁷

In Chorier's simulation of the female philosophical libertine—taken as the genuine work of Aloisia Sigea by some seventeenth-century readers—true pleasure increasingly derives, not from heroic priapism, but from 'erudita libido' or educated desire, encyclopedic knowledge, conceptual refinement, the expert control and deployment of images. The seventeenth-century French author has thus transformed the Italian discourse of prostitution, launched in Aretino's 1534 *Ragionamenti* and refined in Pallavicino's *Retorica delle puttane* (Chapter 2 below). The whore-trickster becomes the 'woman of pleasure', consciously raising her sexuality to the status of art, and the salty street-dialogue of Aretino becomes the Latin of high-libertine 'theory'. *L'Escole des filles* had already softened and tamed the discourse of illicit sexuality by what I call the 'domestic turn', confining it to the vernacular, heterosexual exploits of the *bonne bourgeoisie*; Chorier reinvests this libertine domesticity with the perverse sophistication of Secundus and his ancient Roman masters.

For Casanova, Secundus and Chorier together form a mutually defining couple, whose interaction constitutes both the 'theory' and the history of sexuality. Libertine literary history could almost be described as a set of variations on Secundus' epigram, and the three-way encounter of these authors certainly defines the limits of my period. I trace the paradoxical interchanges of language, education, and sexuality from the humanist age of Secundus to the Cartesian epoch of Chorier, and from there to the dawn of the eighteenth century. The age of Casanova and Diderot will be revisited only briefly in my Epilogue, but this book will follow the reading of Chorier with detailed case studies of his reception and invocation in the generation following, in erotica such as *Venus in the Cloister* (1683) and in libertine-inclined authors such as John Oldham and John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester (Chs. 6–8 below).

Secundus' question (and Casanova's answer) pose a 'theoretical' challenge even today, if we take *both* gender and language seriously. According to 'Natural Philosophy' masculinity derived from essential and innate features of dominance. According to grammatical laws the gender of the word determined the nature of the thing and its place in the hierarchy. (As we shall see in Chapter 1, every schoolboy learned that 'the masculine gender is more worthy than the feminine'.) How then can biology and grammar diverge, assigning the feminine gender to the most masculine part, the Empress Mentula? Secundus' witty epigram locates one crucial place where they fail to correspond, and sends them into a spin by defining the phallus as the quintessentially female attribute. In the French adaptation of Chorier Secundus' paradox receives a fresh twist, reminding us that education in language constituted an important gateway to élite masculinity. The author of *L'Academie des dames* (1680) incorporated Secundus' line into his own epigram, proposing that any sexual 'grammarian' unable to answer the opening question—precisely

¹⁷ Ch. 3 n. 33 below.

the question that the Englishman poses to the pre-adolescent Casanova—should be castrated on the spot, refused physical entry to the category of manhood.

My subject, then, is the educational fantasy in sexual writing, or what I call the erotic-didactic nexus, as it evolves towards the idea of philosophical libertinism. In some circles *Éros philosophe*¹⁸ is considered a purely eighteenth-century phenomenon, but titles like *La Philosophie des dames* (the second and more outrageous part of *L'Escole des filles*) show that it belongs very much to this period. My analysis of the 'schooling' element in seventeenth-century hard-core discourse, and the formative claims made by its real and imaginary readers, defines a crucial moment in the literary history of gender and the intellectual history of the body. The title of *L'Escole/La Philosophie* in translation, *The School of Venus or The Ladies Delight Reduced into Rules of Practice* (c.1676), suggests both the effect sought by libertine discourse and the methodology appropriate to study it: the libertine text must be understood as an ideological 'school' and a performative script, encouraging the translation of 'theory' into 'practice', while at the same time 'reducing' the fiction of female subjectivity to a set of male-ordered 'rules' for procuring 'the ladies delight'—in effect defining the entire purpose of ladies *as* delight. As early as 1686, the militant feminist Sarah Fyge accused men of wishing to have all women brought up 'in Venus' School', a phrase that serves both as a title for the erotic-didactic text and as a euphemism for the brothel.¹⁹

Putting women in their places, for 'pornographers' and their feminist critics alike, seems to have been the principal task assigned to these 'mighty lewd books'. Many of the texts studied below must strike the reader as grossly and aggressively misogynist, 'offensive' in every sense; as we shall see in Chapter 5, Horner in Wycherley's *Country-Wife* (1675) only has to mention *L'Escole des filles* for observers to conclude that 'he hates Women perfectly'. In the following analysis, however, I devote less attention to the hostility of these works and more to the disobedience of their female characters, to the cracks and slippages revealed in the gendering process, and to the countervailing work of women authors. As Secundus' paradox suggests, linguistic dominance confers 'masculine' authority on the hyper-feminine narrator and preceptor. Conversely, the male author feminizes himself by impersonating and expropriating the discourse of sexuality, what Montaigne calls the 'flux de caquet' or stream of midwives' babble—applying the term to his own writing.²⁰ As Oldham pungently remarks, emulating Aloisia Sigea puts him in the position of a 'Secretary' to the vulva (Ch. 6 below), acknowledging her power to dictate the 'Arcana of Venus',

¹⁸ The title of an essay collection by François Moureau and Alain-Marc Rieu, on *discours libertins des Lumières* (Paris, 1984), in which only the article by Rosy Pinhas-Delpuech (11–20) deals with the 17th century; the same chronological assumption is shared by Catherine Cusset (ed.), *Libertinage and Modernity*, special issue, *Yale French Studies*, 94 (1998).

¹⁹ *The Female Advocate, or An Answer to a Late Satyr against the Pride, Lust and Inconstancy of Woman* (1686), 7; cf. *The London-Bawd* ('4th edn.', 1711), 113 ('The House which I now keep . . . goes under several Denominations: Some call it *The School of Venus*') and D. A. Coward, 'Eighteenth-Century Attitudes to Prostitution', *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 189 (1980), 386 n. 38 ('Académie de Venus').

²⁰ Ch. 1 n. 70 below.

to shape the sexual ‘discipline’. The articulate pornographic heroine unravels ancient binary classifications like active/passive, strong/weak, culture/nature, and even female/male; as Aretino proposed and *The Whores Rhetorick* repeated, ‘A Whore is a Whore, but a Whore is not a Woman.’²¹

In a further complication, Wycherley’s Horner suggests that mastery of the canon might be a hollow victory at best, since his triumphant flaunting of the illicit book, with its supposedly privileged view of the secret desires of externally virtuous women, is designed to convince bystanders that he is a eunuch (Ch. 5, sect. 2 below). In this alternative view, representation compensates for deficiency and verbal misogyny expresses only an inability to please women. Indeed, the libertine remains profoundly uncertain whether language is a mediating force or an obstacle between physical desire and rational self-consciousness, an accessory to seduction or a substitute for it. As Wycherley’s contemporary the Earl of Mulgrave lamented, lovers ‘fall into discourse’ when ‘action’ fails.²² Molière’s Dom Juan likewise declares that ‘Tous les discours n’avancent point les choses; il faut faire et non pas dire’ (discourses don’t carry things forward; we must *do*, and not *say*). Nevertheless, his classic account of the pleasure he takes in methodical seduction, ‘day by day’ and ‘step by step’, ends with an admission that language was the whole point: his passion collapses after conquest because ‘there is nothing more to say.’²³

Though women’s writings form only a small proportion of the total discourse on sexuality, and the immodesty of the subject restricts them still further, the presence and relevance of female authorship was felt strongly in the ‘pornosphere’. With the obvious exception of the homoerotic *Alcibiade fanciullo a scola* (Ch. 2, sect. 2), all the core erotic texts discussed below purport to capture the true voice of women. Diderot’s fantasy of the *bijou indiscret*, the talking vulva that cannot lie, suggests that in sexual matters the female voice was considered immediately truthful, exempt from the problems of discourse. Chorier even invents an elaborate fiction to ascribe the maternity of his *Satyra Sotadica* to the historical figure Aloisia Sigea (1522–60), in the spirit of other learned forgers who claim to have discovered the intimately sexual letters of Cleopatra herself; to create a ‘learned lady’ erudite in nothing but sex he must simulate the real-life achievement of women humanist intellectuals. As we shall see repeatedly, canon-forming citations and allusions to these core texts likewise link them to known female authors: *Erotopolis* constructs a courtesans’ reading-list that includes *The School of Venus* and the novels of Madeleine de Scudéry, the same association that led Pepys to buy *L’Escole des filles* for his wife to translate;²⁴ the facetious 1684 *Parliament of Women* refers to ‘the Queen of Navars Novels’ and Margaret Cavendish’s *World’s Olio* as it reviews books for the new national curriculum—though in the end it entrusts the entire task of subject-

²¹ Ch. 2 n. 38 below.

²² Ch. 6 n. 73 below.

²³ *Dom Juan*, II. iv, 1. ii (‘forcer pied à pied toutes les petites résistances qu’elle nous oppose . . . lorsqu’on en est maître une fois, il n’y a plus rien à dire’); for the problem of language, see my ‘Lovelace and the Paradoxes of Libertinism’, in Margaret Anne Doody and Peter Sabor (eds.), *Samuel Richardson: Tercentenary Essays* (Cambridge, 1989), 70–88, esp. 74.

²⁴ (1684), 59–60, more fully cited in Ch. 5, sect. 1 below.

formation to three texts only, decreeing ‘that *Aloysia Sigea*, *L’Eschole de fils*, and *Peter Aretines* discourses be translated, and fairly Printed for the Particular good of the Female Common-weal’ (102, 80, 136–7). *Schooling Sex* reads these male-oriented and male-consumed female impersonations against the grain, with the help of women’s own *prise de parole*.

It is not my intention to present an essentialist, unified voice of ‘female’ authenticity, but rather to sample multifarious discourses. Against the fabricated sex-and-theory queens of libertine fiction, ancestors of Fanny Hill and Thérèse Philosophe, I will set Marguerite, Queen of Navarre, and Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (both cited in the faux-feminist *Parliament of Women*), Marie de Gournay, Lucy Hutchinson, Louise Bourgeois, Marie de Sévigné, Aphra Behn, Jane Barker, and others. Reversing Pepys’s association with Scudéry, I link *L’Escole des filles* and its ilk to contemporary educators like Anna Maria van Schurman and Françoise de Maintenon, and to the *femmes fortes* explored in Ian Maclean’s *Woman Triumphant* and Joan DeJean’s *Tender Geographies*. As well as austere sixteenth-century humanists like Sigea, I bring in courtesan-authors like Veronica Franco and Tullia d’Aragona—whose version of philosophical Eros I discuss at length in Chapter 1—and feminists like Moderata Fonte, who define love as the ‘female’ subject par excellence and extend sympathy to the transgressive woman. Many other women are cited from manuscripts or legal records, or evoked as sources of cultural influence like the *salonnières* Catherine de Rambouillet and Julie de Montausier, Wycherley’s preceptors during his teenage years.

Rather than leaving the boys alone together, then, I crowd them with citations from the women they impersonate, some necessarily brief, some analysed at length. I show Queen Christina of Sweden influencing Descartes’s turn to the philosophy of passion, which in turn was expropriated for the ‘Cartesian erotics’ of *L’Escole des filles* and the *Satyra Sotadica*. From Sarah Fyge I derive the idea of coercive enrolment in ‘Venus’ School’, and hence the idea of reading texts as institutions. From Margaret Cavendish, and especially from her 1662 comedy *The Female Academy* (Ch. 1 below), I learn to interpret the sexualization of women’s philosophy and women’s education as a reactionary, defensive move. More broadly, I trace the cultural influence of women’s creativity even in the details of pornography: scandals surrounding the composer Barbara Strozzi bring out the erotic fascination of castrati (Ch. 2, sect. 1); the ‘knowing hand’ of the painter Artemisia Gentileschi appears in the masturbatory fantasies of *La Philosophie des dames* (Fig. 7, Ch. 3).

Unlike earlier studies of libertinism and philosophy—Dale Underwood on Hobbes and Lucretius in the English Restoration, Warren Chernaik on sexual freedom in Behn and Rochester—*Schooling Sex* takes its cue from titles like ‘The Ladies’ Philosophy’ to ask, what is at stake in this impersonation of the *femme savante libertine*? What does the erotic canon defend against? Is ‘The Ladies’ Academy’ really a School of Men? To place men in the pupil’s role provoked a certain disquiet: education should remain a high-cultural preserve, sexuality a baser ‘natural’ domain where men instinctively play the active part without needing instruction, where anatomy replaces knowledge as the agent of destiny. To reveal the libertine as

‘Learned’ (in both senses), to show sex ‘taught’ by books rather than conveyed in the blood, to ‘read’ men as if they were themselves texts, makes all too visible the constructedness of masculinity. Behn makes this explicit in her critique of libertine inconstancy: if man’s desires ‘like lightning flash and are no more’, this comes not so much from innate character as from ‘a fatal lesson *he has learn’d*, | After fruition ne’re to be concern’d.’²⁵ This ‘discipline’ is born, not ‘in the veins’—as Montaigne put it—but in the pages of ‘mighty lewd books’, of the kind that informed Pepys and Casanova.

Making sex speak has always seemed problematic. The Judaeo-Christian legacy of shame imposed an embarrassed silence, and yet for the Christian the sexual has always been irreducibly cognitive, bound up from the start with knowledge however carnal. As St Augustine put it, the sexual drive ‘*rubescit videri*’ (‘blushes to be seen’), but still ‘*appetit sciri*’ (‘hungers to be known’).²⁶ Augustine found an epistemic component in sexuality itself, and other Church Fathers gave lust a kind of creative, authorial power, a capacity to ‘assume all forms’ like Proteus and ‘fashion all things’ like an artist; in our period, devotional writers feel the need to warn off corrupt readers ‘whose lust is all their book.’²⁷ The texts that make up what I call the hard-core curriculum act out this ‘appetite-to-be-known’ in their didactic and initiatory scenarios, starting with inchoate but intense longings and ending with ‘erudite’ mastery of all the tricks in the book. Libertine education evolves through all the stages of the conventional school, from practice to theory, from basic grammar to intermediate rhetoric and then to advanced ‘philosophy’, taught in a ‘college’ or ‘University of Love’. This progression or graduation is clearly spelled out in titles like *The Practical Part of Love* and *The Female Academy* (Ch. 1 below), *La retorica delle puttane* (Ch. 2), *La Philosophie des dames* (Ch. 3), *The School of Love* and *L’Academie des dames* (Ch. 7).

If it is not to seem merely facetious, libertine ‘philosophy’ must establish some real intellectual credentials while at the same time abandoning the conceptual hierarchy that separates genital sexuality from the higher faculties of language and cognition. Plato had pushed this separation to an almost comic extreme: the unsatisfied womb may become a raging animal and the penis, worse still, is by its very nature a brute beast ‘deaf to reason.’²⁸ (Compare Pepys’s diagnosis of Charles II, ‘*Cazzo dritto non vuolt consiglio*’, the stiff prick wants no counsel.²⁹) Nevertheless, some Renaissance philosophers like Tullia d’Aragona attempt to reconcile physical desire with Platonic love-doctrine (Ch. 1, sect. 1 below). Plato powerfully embodied the idea of Eros as Gnosis, a fit subject for the Academy, an esoteric doctrine leading by ‘steps’

²⁵ Ch. 8 n. 47 below; cf. my discussion of Behn in ‘The Culture of Priapism’, *Review*, 10 (1988), 30–1.

²⁶ Cf. my *One Flesh: Paradisal Marriage and Sexual Relations in the Age of Milton* (Oxford, 1987, 1993), 47.

²⁷ Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, III. i, *Opera Graece et Latine*, ed. John Potter (Oxford, 1715), i. 250–1; George Herbert, ‘The Church Porch’, line 12.

²⁸ *Timaeus*, 91b–c, cited by Montaigne (just before the ‘discipline’ passage) and explicated by Constance Jordan in ‘Sexuality and Volition in “Sur des vers de Virgile”’, *Montaigne Studies*, 8 (1996), 68–9.

²⁹ 15 May 1663.

to a higher initiation and divulged by a female speaker (the prophetess Diotima in the *Symposium*). Though often interpreted as merely ‘anti-Platonic’, seventeenth-century libertinism retains much of the Platonic hierarchy when it exalts the most intense sexual experience, when Antonio Rocco’s *Alcibiade fanciullo a scola* (c.1630) equates the superiority of homosexual love with the ‘diletto dalla conoscenza’ that distinguishes us from animals (Ch. 2, sect. 2), when *L’Escole des filles* uses the same terms for heterosexual pleasure outside the constraints of marriage (Ch. 3), or when Chorier makes conceptual figuration and Protean ‘metamorphosis’ the primary source of desire in a text ostensibly devoted to physical passion (Ch. 4). Even Milton, a fierce defender of virtuous Eros against the libertine opposition, assigns physical consummation a cognitive and heuristic role. Not only does he give Adam and Eve a full sexual life in Eden—the subject of my earlier book *One Flesh*—but he declares that ‘by’ this wedded love all other human relationships ‘first were known’ (*Paradise Lost*, IV. 751–7, my emphasis).

Less idealistic philosophies of sex could be derived from Lucretius and Lucian, Descartes and Hobbes. Lucretius’ *De Rerum Natura* provided a profoundly contradictory model, quite apart from the fact that his teachings ran counter to Christian orthodoxy; the great poetic authority on Epicurean atomism sounded oddly ambivalent about pleasure, which (in its refined form) constituted Epicurus’ *summum bonum*. Book I celebrates ‘sweet Venus’ as a cosmic, social, and aesthetic force, invoking her simultaneously as the procreative spirit that arouses all animals in the spring, as the calming influence over Mars that re-establishes prosperity and harmony in civil-war Rome, and as the seductive ‘charm’ or *lepor* that he implores for his own poem. In book IV, however, he paints a picture of ‘our Venus’ so vivid and disturbing that Lucy Hutchinson, the first English translator of the full *De Rerum Natura*, declared it fitter work for a midwife.³⁰ Human sexuality is represented either as joyless procreation or as futile frenzy.

Like Plato (and Descartes later), Lucretius describes sexual intercourse as the attempt to unify two bodies—but his explanation is wholly material and atomistic. Perception and desire both spring from the physical image, the hollow, gauzy simulacrum that peels off from the object, enters through the eye, and combines with the brain of the perceiver. Lovers long to incorporate each other like food—hence all the frantic rubbing and biting—but they are doomed to perpetual frustration: ‘all is in vain, for they can rub nothing off, nor penetrate, nor pass with their whole body into another.’³¹ As later philosophers infer, ‘sexual relationships’ are impossible and ‘sexual techniques’—the postures and attitudes taught in all the books studied below—are nothing but ‘ornaments, dissimulations, inadequate compensations for

³⁰ *Lucy Hutchinson’s Translation of Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*, ed. Hugh de Quehen (Ann Arbor, 1996), 139; Hutchinson omits precisely the passages that Dryden selected for his own pleasure, adding extra sexual details (cf. n. 31 below).

³¹ *De Rerum Natura*, IV. 1110–11 (‘nequiquam, quoniam nihil inde abradere possunt | nec penetrare et abire in corpus corpore toto’); Dryden translates as ‘bodies cannot pierce, nor be in bodies lost’ and adds ‘all the instruments of love’ to the hands and teeth in the feeding frenzy, as if the penis were also a devouring organ (iii. 58–9).

this blockage.³² Lucretius bequeathed both an art of erotic description and a scientific enquiry into its material processes, which in turn influenced Virgil's *Georgics*—an even more prestigious poem that encapsulates in quotable form the sexual origin of consciousness ('mentem Venus ipsa dedit', 'Venus herself gave the mind') and the uniformity of the procreative urge in all creatures ('Amor omnibus idem', 'love is the same in all'). We shall find these concepts and these phrases in learned speculations on sex from Montaigne (Ch. 1 below) to Rocco (Ch. 2) and Chorier (Ch. 4).

Lucian's satirical perspective on Socratic love helped to offset the Renaissance emphasis on Platonic purity. (Lucian's *Dialogues of the Hetairai* also influenced Aretino and subsequent adaptors of the woman-to-woman dialogue, after they were translated as *Piacevoli ragionamenti* in 1527.) As we shall see, both Rocco and Chorier propose the 'prurient Socrates' as a role-model for hedonistic philosophy, and both give a prominent place to the *Erōtes* then thought to be by Lucian, which calmly compares the pleasure-claims of heterosexuality and paedophilia while inclining towards the latter. When Rocco (in the persona of Alcibiades' love-struck tutor) praises those 'few' whom Nature has made 'speculativi' and 'of a philosophical spirit', who entirely 'flee' all connection with women (*Alcibiade*, 73), he summarizes the argument most fully laid out in pseudo-Lucian: marriage is a biological necessity, associated with the earliest and crudest stages of civilization, whereas 'love for males is a noble duty enjoined by a philosophic spirit. Anything cultivated for aesthetic reasons in the midst of abundance is accompanied with greater honour than things which require for their existence immediate need, and beauty is in every way superior to necessity' (*tou anagkaion to kalon kreitton*).³³

This equation of 'philosophic' desire with elite homosexuality persisted. Tullia d'Aragona, speaking from her position in the genteel demimonde of Florence, uses *Socratici* as a familiar term for pederasts, and 200 years later Voltaire uses *amour nommé socratique* the same way, wondering why 'an infamous assault against nature should nevertheless be so natural'.³⁴ Montesquieu describes men of previously orthodox 'taste' succumbing to *amour philosophique* when they fall in love with beautiful *castrati* actors—his main example being an Englishman on the Grand Tour,³⁵ like the one who plied the boy Casanova with gender-confusing quotations from Secundus. The transsexual eunuch, the product of theatrical and surgical art, evokes a language of 'philosophy' and 'taste' that overrides the normative disposition.

Among modern philosophers, Descartes is the one cited most frequently in the following pages, mainly because his uncompromisingly physical explanations of

³² Jean-Claude Milner, *Le Triple du plaisir* (Paris, 1997), 36, a ref. I owe to Ann Banfield, who notes that Jacques Lacan, in *Le Séminaire*, xx: *Encore, 1972–1973* (Paris, 1975), repeatedly asserts that 'il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel'; apparently alluding to the impossibility of devouring the body of the Other (26).

³³ Loeb Classical Library *Lucian*, VII, tr. M. D. Macleod (1967), ch. 33 and cf. chs. 39 ff., 51.

³⁴ *Dictionnaire philosophique*, ed. Béatrice Didier ([Paris], 1994), 79; for d'Aragona and 'Socratic' pederasty see Ch. 1, sect. 1 below.

³⁵ Travel notes for 1729, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Roger Caillois, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade (Paris, 1985), i. 679.

amorous passion gave such rich opportunities to libertine writers who might reject his severe dualism. Erudite pornographers like Chorier naturally rejoiced in Descartes's theory of the body driven by surges of hot fluid (the animal spirits) and commanded by a tiny bud of flesh, the pineal gland. Cartesian ideas as well as body-images flourish throughout this literature. In *L'Escole des filles* as well as in *Dom Juan*, 'method' becomes a key term in the language of sexual technique, the 'step-by-step' advance of carnal knowledge 'by an orderly effort', according to 'a set of certain and easy rules'.³⁶ In Pallavicino's *Retorica delle puttane* as well as in Descartes's letters to Queen Christina and *Les Passions de l'âme*—the late treatise influenced by her questioning—the most extreme and intense forms of love are given a 'heroic' or sublime status, increased rather than diminished by excess (Chs. 1–2). Descartes recognizes that Nature 'represents' erotic *jouissance* as 'the greatest of all the goods that humanity can possess',³⁷ and his contemporaries express the same concept more directly, finding the supreme good in 'fucking': *L'Academie des dames* declares that 'le souverain bien | Ne consiste qu'à foutre bien' (Fig. 16 below); *The Whores Rhetorick* imagines women who 'place their chief happiness, their *summum bonum* (as I have heard a Philosopher speak), in gratifying their carnal and obscene desires' (213). Even the *cogito* is adapted to give ontological force to *coitus*, anticipating the modern phallogocentric's creed *je bande donc je suis*.³⁸

The relation between Cartesian erotics and libertine sexual fiction, I suggest, cannot simply be explained as parodic mockery. Not coincidentally, they both emerged at a crucial turning point in intellectual history, when the passions and the material body came under the closest scrutiny. Philosophia could always be embodied *allegorically* as a female power, enthroned upon Nature—putting it firmly beneath her as it raises her to eminence—and served by muscular epebes who raise the banner of 'causarum cognitio', the understanding of causes (Fig. 2). This is Raphael's icon in the Vatican Stanze, made visible in seventeenth-century France in a large-scale engraving. In the age of Descartes the allegorical body of philosophy became literal; emotions, appetites, and even the machinery of the aroused body became primary objects of systematic study, while advanced programmes of sexual enlightenment claimed to be distinguished by *connaissance de cause*, as we shall see in Rocco and *L'Escole* itself. Jacqueline Lichtenstein has even discovered a feminization of philosophy in France, under the influence of the *salons*, and illustrates it with the Raphael–Audran engraving of *La Philosophie*.³⁹

As Susan James concludes from her study of emotion from Descartes to Spinoza, 'the fundamental categories of activity and passivity' become 'increasingly precarious' in this period; *L'Escole des filles*, which teasingly displays the motto *Agere et pati* on its title page, confounds those gendered categories still further by placing the

³⁶ *Regulae ad Directionem Ingenii*, rule 4, and cf. *Discours de la méthode*, esp. part 2 ('peu à peu comme par degrés').

³⁷ *Les Passions de l'âme*, art. 90.

³⁸ Cf. Georges Falconnet and Nadine Lefaucheur, *La Fabrication des mâles* (Paris, 1975), 30, Erik Rémès, *Je bande donc je suis: Roman* (Paris, 1999), and Ch. 3 n. 75 below.

³⁹ *La Couleur éloquente: Rhétorique et peinture à l'âge classique* (Paris, 1989), 'Ouverture', esp. 2.

2. Benoit I Audran after Raphael, *La Philosophie*

woman on top at every juncture (Ch. 3 below). Theories of the divided, multiple soul give way to a new conception of *desire* as ‘the central appetitive force which enables us to stay alive and governs all our actions.’⁴⁰ This idea of an all-explaining and ‘all-encompassing’ master-drive—which Hobbes and Spinoza both call *conatus*, and Hobbes himself translated as ‘endeavour’—is entirely congruous with the obsessive devotion to sexual desire in libertine literature, where the appetite for carnal knowledge translates into an escalating narrative drive towards ever greater complexities and transgressions. As I show in Chapter 4, *conatus* is a key word in Churier, the most important erotic writer of the period and the chief supplier of ‘theory’ to

⁴⁰ James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford, 1997), 291.

Casanova. The new, unified notion of desire revives Augustine's theory of Love as the impulse from which all other passions derive, and it seems no accident that the two most extreme libertine poets, Claude Le Petit in France and the Earl of Rochester in England, also versified St Augustine.⁴¹

Conceived in this grand theoretical way, passion and desire break down the mind–body distinction, thereby weakening all conceptual structures based on that separation. Sexual ethics, whether hedonist like Rochester's or ascetic like Spinoza's, could now be derived from internal examination of embodied passion rather than from external authorities like law or Scripture. Even Descartes, in James's interpretation, encourages the view that despite his dualism 'thinking is in general passionate', that 'the body thinks'.⁴² Erotic literature rushes to provide the practice for this theory. Throughout the libertine canon, in all its languages, we will encounter phrases like 'ingenious lust' or 'erudite libido'.⁴³ The result is a dizzying synthesis of sex and knowledge, desire and connoisseurship, that undermines Foucault's distinction between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* and anticipates modern coinages like 'pornology' or 'erotography'.⁴⁴ Even comic versions of this synthesis—when Chorier describes the penis as a little philosopher or derives *cunnius* from the same etymological root as *cognition*—convey real ideas through intellectual humour or *serio ludere*, as Chorier himself insists (Ch. 4 below). Before our period, reason was generally conceived as a 'Princess' aloof from the passions and fiercely opposed to them by definition; after our period, no less a philosopher than David Hume could declare that reason 'is and only ought to be the slave of the passions'.⁴⁵ The texts studied below—the hard-core dialogues that excited Pepys and Casanova, as well as poems like Rochester's 1676 *Satyr against Mankind* that define 'right reason' as a device to keep up the pleasures of sense—play a crucial role in this transformation.

Hobbes's account of the restless and insatiable *conatus* sounds very much like Lucretius' description of intercourse; though Hobbes substituted power for sex as the unattainable goal, many contemporaries switched them back again. It is easy to sense Dom Juan looming up behind the principle that 'Felicity is a continuall progresse of the desire, from one object to another, the attaining of the former being still but the way to the later'.⁴⁶ Many literary historians have traced similarities between Hobbes, Rochester, and the stage-libertines of English drama.⁴⁷ Instead I would emphasize Hobbes's radical nominalism, which swept away the notion of an essential difference between love and lust, making it all the more thinkable to study

⁴¹ See my *One Flesh*, ch. 2, esp. 42 ('my weight is my love'); for Augustine in Le Petit and Rochester, see Chs. 3 n. 116 and 6 n. 57 below.

⁴² *Passion and Action*, 97, 106.

⁴³ See Killigrew, *Comedies and Tragedies* (1664), 458, and Chorier, *Satyra*, VII. 220.

⁴⁴ Coined by Gilles Deleuze (Ch. 4 n. 90 below) and Jean-Pierre Dubost (Ch. 4 n. 53), respectively.

⁴⁵ Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Mind in General* (1601–24), ed. William Webster Newbold (1986), 95 (a ref. I owe to Amy Greenstadt); Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*, II. iii. 3.

⁴⁶ *Leviathan*, ch. 11.

⁴⁷ See, among many others, Thomas H. Fujimura, *The Restoration Comedy of Wit* (Princeton, 1952), Dale Underwood, *Etherege and the Seventeenth-Century Comedy of Manners* (New Haven, 1957), and Warren Chernaik, *Sexual Freedom in Restoration Literature* (Cambridge, 1995), ch. 1, 'Hobbes and the Libertines'.

genital desire and sexual practice with the philosophical attention previously given to Platonic Eros. Hobbes applies Virgil's biological maxim 'Amor omnibus idem' to the whole of human sexuality, not just to women as Montaigne had done, and he insists on its cognitive dimension:

The appetite which men call *Lust*, and the fruition that appertaineth thereunto, is a *Sensual* pleasure, but *not onely* that; there is in it also a delight of the minde. . . . The name *Lust* is used where it is condemned; otherwise it is called by the general word *Love*: for the passion is one and the same indefinite desire of different Sex, as natural as Hunger.⁴⁸

This collapsing of a time-honoured dichotomy became so familiar that John Dunton, commenting on one of Rochester's most obscene poems, can airily refer to 'Love or Lust (for Philosophers make no great distinction between 'em)'.⁴⁹

Hobbes's 'bold but also bald'⁵⁰ mechanistic theory reminds us that seventeenth-century science—that is, 'Natural Philosophy'—revived several systems based on the material stratum, whether Baconian empiricism, Epicurean atomism, or the left-wing Aristotelian physiology taught at Padua (explicitly evoked by Rocco to defend the naturalness of homosexual desire). Bacon equated Cupid with the atom, an association followed by several Stuart writers eager to link courtly eroticism with Epicurean theories of matter and pleasure.⁵¹ Conversely, innumerable passages in libertine prose and verse equate sexual experiment with 'science', and though the intention is sometime facetious it concurs with the arguments of serious moralists eager to stamp out such reading matter. John Evelyn, Fellow of the Royal Society, draws on 'experimental' evidence when he warns his soon-to-be-married son against 'lewd postures', 'un-natural figures', and 'speculative Lusts'—a phrase that conjures up an entire programme of cognitive-erotic transgressions, acted out in front of mirrors.⁵² (We have seen that both the Venetian libertine and the American preacher associate *speculative sex* with homoerotic experiment.⁵³) In a sense Pepys, another stout member of the Royal Society, puts empiricism into action when he pursues *L'Escole des filles* as 'a sober man' in search of information, and he does find the book at the shop of John Martin, official printer to that organization; at about the same time, Robert Hooke turns his microscope on spermatozoa generously provided by himself. The historian Margaret Jacob plausibly sees

⁴⁸ *Humane Nature, or The Fundamental Elements of Policie, Being a Discoverie of the Faculties, Acts, and Passions of the Soul of Man, from their Original Causes* (1650), 106–7.

⁴⁹ *Petticoat-Government, in a Letter to the Court Ladies* (1702), 18; for an attempt to reinstate the love/lust distinction on cognitive grounds, see J. Martin Stafford, 'On Distinguishing between Love and Lust', *Journal of Value Inquiry*, 11 (1977), 292–303.

⁵⁰ James, *Passion and Action*, 136.

⁵¹ Cf. Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Stuart Culture* (Amherst, Mass., 1998), ch. 1 *passim*, esp. 23, 28, 34–7.

⁵² Letter to John Evelyn, junior, endorsed by recipient 'From my Father 1680', BL MS Evelyn, Correspondence, vol. 13, letter number 1526 (I am grateful to John Wing, librarian of Christ Church, Oxford, for permission to examine this manuscript when it was still in private possession). W. G. Hiscock, *John Evelyn and his Family Circle* [1955], 122–3, partially transcribes the letter and dates the wedding to February 1680.

⁵³ p. 15 and epigraph, above.

L'Escole, L'Academie des dames, and their eighteenth-century progeny as 'materialist pornography', where male and female characters alike become hard particles propelled by appetite, colliding and combining according to the newly discovered laws of dynamics.⁵⁴

Schooling Sex offers a more precise point of contact between (pseudo)didactic erotica and natural philosophy—via the 'educational revolution' that inspired new colleges, teaching orders, and curricula. Seventeenth-century educational theory posited direct, sensuous knowledge as the basis for acquiring complex ideas: Comenius insisted that children should encounter the world 'ad vivam autopsian', by living sense-impression, and reformulated the entire sensible world as a set of graduated steps to the universal wisdom he called Pansophia. But how can pupils learn about the passions? How could the live interior be experienced without an autopsy in the medical sense, which becomes vivid for the spectator only when the subject herself is dead?

Educational reform yoked together many different techniques for intensifying perception and rendering the world *ad vivum*, for exploring both the body and the soul, and each one finds its 'pornotropic' or sexualized equivalent in the clandestine erotic text. Graphic illustration and rhetoric aim to bring the referent 'as if before the very eyes'.⁵⁵ Science invents ways to dilate and inspect the living interior as well as to dissect the dead. Various religious practices transfer these discursive and corporeal technologies to spiritual introspection. Devotional writers particularly encourage female truth-seekers to 'leaf through their inner book to apprehend the word made flesh', and one of them, analysed by Nicholas Paige, conceives the 'interior' as a physical space where Love holds the subject captive: 'the very word *intérieur* ravishes' his disciple, who in turn exhorts others 'to enlarge and dilate their interior incessantly'.⁵⁶ The single word *dilate* belongs equally in the rhetorical, medical, and devotional mode.

The close relation of Eros and natural philosophy is emblemized in another seated figure engraved after a high Renaissance model, from Charles Estienne's 1545 treatise on dissection (Fig. 3). This disquieting image literally combines scientific and libertine representation, because the figures are taken directly from erotic images engraved by Jacopo Caraglio. In this case the seated figure is hermaphroditic; the body (as Bette Talvacchia has shown) is borrowed from an ephebic Bacchus in the original *Loves of the Gods*, with female head and genitalia added.⁵⁷ The posture, the setting, and the added diagrammatic markings all suggest or point towards the pudenda, yet paradoxically obstruct the actual anatomical purpose since the organ in question is barely visible. The sensuous head and suggestive left hand

⁵⁴ 'The Materialist World of Pornography', in Hunt (ed.), *Invention of Pornography*, 157–202.

⁵⁵ Ch. 2 n. 6 below; Dubost briefly sketches a link between Loyolan spiritual exercises, *L'Académie des dames*, and the *ante oculos* effect of rhetoric, in 'Libertinage and Rationality: From the "Will to Knowledge" to Libertine Textuality', in Cusset (ed.), *Libertinage and Modernity*, 63.

⁵⁶ Jean Aumont cited Ch. 1 n. 46 below, Jean-Joseph Surin cited Ch. 3 n. 23; for rhetorical and genital associations, see Patricia Parker, 'Othello and Hamlet: Dilation, Spying, and the "Secret Place" of Woman', *Representations*, 44 (Fall 1993), 60–95.

⁵⁷ *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton, 1999), 177–9.

3. Charles Estienne, *De Dissectione Partium Corporis Humani* (Paris, 1545), 287

hint at erotic rather than obstetric self-exploration, and the author even apologizes for his ‘confusing’ and ‘indecent’ illustration.⁵⁸ It may seem far-fetched to claim that this image comments on the difficulties of inferring interior knowledge from external genitalia, except that the objects in the foreground explicitly raise that issue: the

⁵⁸ Charles Estienne, *La Dissection des parties du corps humain* (Paris, 1546), 312, 313, amplifying his own *De Dissectione Partium Corporis Humani* (Paris, 1545), 288 (‘ne quis impudicam picturam calumnietur’).

syringe inserts without seeing, the hook brings matter to light but at the risk of injury or death, whereas the speculum—also known as ‘the miroure or behoulder of the Wombe’⁵⁹—allows precisely the *viva autopsia* that Comenius placed at the core of all education. Even today the speculum is used by sex-positive performance artists such as Annie Sprinkle and (metaphorically) by feminist theorists, most notably Luce Irigaray. In the seventeenth century the name of this inward-gazing instrument—literally, a mirror—links it to instructional titles such as John Sadler’s *The Sicke Womans Private Looking-Glasse, wherein Methodically Are Handled All Uterine Affects, or Diseases Arising from the Wombe* (1636). I will argue that shockingly vivid representations of sexual arousal—or what Evelyn calls ‘speculative lust’—likewise serve as a speculum, erotic-educational rather than gynaecological.

The libertine text turns all these devices back into flesh, matching their speculative power ‘to the life.’ *La retorica delle puttane* teaches how to combine verbal and sexual intensification, creating an illusion of *sviscerato affetto*—literally, emotion that draws the guts out—while remaining secretly unmoved. The French initiation-dialogues drop the trickery and give special educative force to the experience of arousal, which constitutes the whole point of living, the supreme manifestation of life, and therefore the readiest means to bring the truth of the body *ad vivum*. *L’Ecole des filles* proposes a ‘hieroglyphic’ mode of analysing the sex act, based not on biology but on ‘reciprocal mutation’, each lover ‘figuring herself’ the other and so being ‘reassured’ that exterior gesture signifies inward affect (Ch. 3 below). Chorier’s *Aloisia Sigea* puts this theory into practice, inventing a ‘Sapphic’ seduction-dialogue where words, eyes, hands, and genitals cooperate to arouse the pupil, so that she ‘sees everything hidden in the depths of my viscera as if it were placed before my eyes’ (Ch. 4 below). The educator tries to seduce and to *educer*, drawing out the aroused body first visually and then literally, by gesture, exclamation, and ejaculation of seed.

Physical and discursive at the same moment, this erotic version of *viva autopsia* is contrasted to the speculative method of male ‘ridiculous adolescents’ (Chorier, *Satyra*, III. 44), who infer the invisible truths of female sexuality from glimpses of the exterior and fill in the blanks with their own fears and prejudices about insatiable ‘learned’ women. Considered as satire, these texts aim to replace Pansophia with Pornosophia, to discredit the *femme savante* in favour of the mistress exclusively ‘sçavante et spirituelle en amour’ (*Ecole*, p. XLIX). But they also critique masculinist ideology and perceptual shortcomings, offering a counter-programme of sensory enlightenment that is in fact quite congruous with the system-building ambitions of the seventeenth century.

The relation between hard science and my hard-core curriculum is therefore an intimate and dialectic one. Didactic sexology and titillating description converge: titles like *The School of Venus*, *Aloisia Sigea*, and *Sodom* are frequently cited, and even sold, alongside ostensibly medical works like *Aristotle’s Problems*, *Culpepper’s Midwife*, Meibomius’ *De Flagrorum Usu in Re Veneria* (*The Venereal Use of Flogging*),

⁵⁹ A.M. (tr.), *The Frenche Chirurgerye* (Dort, 1597), fos. b3^v, c2^v (incorrectly cited in *OED*, s.v. ‘speculum’ 1); cf. Jacques Guillemeau, *Les Œuvres de chirurgie* (Paris, 1598), 138, 152 (‘Mirouër’).

Claude Quillet's georgic poem *Callipaedia* or 'How to Make Beautiful Children', Venette's *Tableau de l'amour conjugale*, or Sinibaldi's *Rare Verities* (discussed in Chapter 1 below).⁶⁰ Chorier's section-title *Fabrica* evokes Vesalius' anatomy, and his main title *The Arcana of Love and Venus* taps into the desire for 'books of secrets' and instruction in 'how to do it'.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the greatest biologist of the century turned to generation after his triumphant work on the circulation of the blood. An utter failure from the point of view of modern science, William Harvey's *Exercitationes de Generatione Animalium* shares crucial features with the erotic texts studied below. Harvey deepens the mystery of gender by declaring, on grounds of experimental observation, that nothing whatsoever passes from the male to the female at conception; on the other hand, his passionate belief in the creative power of the blood—site of his own famous discovery—leads him to ascribe almost magical properties to the male sperm 'concocted' from it. Despite his attack on other scientists who pursue fictional ideas rather than empirical observation, Harvey can only imagine fertilization as a 'plastic art', an 'immaterial Idea' that sparks conception in the brain-like tissue of the uterus just as the artist translates a concept into an image.⁶² This profound interfusion of cognitive and genital functions is precisely what Harvey shares with the libertine text. In *La retorica delle puttane*, in *L'Alcibiade*, in *L'Escole des filles*, and in *Aloisia Sigea*, we shall see the same presentation of the 'idea' as the key to physical arousal, the same simultaneous erasure and exaltation of the male seed, the same ambiguous treatment of the female as an autonomous, self-manifesting agent and as a mere accessory to the male.

Harvey explores conception in birds rather than pleasure in humans, of course. But even here some covert resemblances slip in. The scientist and the eroticist both pursue the hidden *arcana* of sexuality, and both produce narratives of desire that promote the arousing power of narration. When Harvey isolates the hen so that she can only hear the cock's crowing, she 'trembles with a kind of gentle horror' just as if she had actually copulated—vivid proof of the discursive construction of sexuality? Similarly, the dialogists of *L'Escole* and *Aloisia* describe their own orgasmic response to the descriptions they are sharing: 'ma cousine, je discharge!' In Rocco and in Chorier these discursive pleasures blend with physical provocation, as dialogue turns into action ('take away that adulterous finger!'). Harvey likewise caresses his experimental subjects and softens their '*Uterine Orifice*' with his 'gentle finger', producing a stream of *gaudiis indiciis* or pleasure-indicators, 'murmurs, cries, and gesticulations' that 'express the delightful sweetness of Venus'. Even the 'exceeding large *Yard*' of his ostrich matches the pornographic script.⁶³

⁶⁰ For allusions, advertisements, and prosecution evidence, see nn. 79, 82, and Ch. 7, sect. 3 below; Foxon, 6, 13–14; Porter and Hall, *Facts of Life*, chs. 1–3 *passim*.

⁶¹ Cf. William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton, 1994), and Rudolph M. Bell, *How to Do It: Guides to Good Living for Renaissance Italians* (1999), ch. 2.

⁶² (Amsterdam, 1651), preface *passim*, 143–4, 295, 557–8 (tr. Martin Lluellin, *Anatomical Exercitationes Concerning the Generation of Living Creatures* (1653), 263–5, 542–3).

⁶³ 42, 10–14 (Lluellin, *Anatomical Exercitationes*, 76, 20–3), *Escole*, II, 141, Chorier, *Satyra*, IV, 72; cf. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1990), 142–8, esp. 146.

In Donne's 'A Lecture upon the Shadow' the expert amorist promises to read 'a Lecture, Love, in love's philosophy', words that impressed Julia Kristeva so much that she displayed them (in English) as the epigraph to her book *Histoires d'amour*. But Donne's conception of philosophy requires that he and his lover 'Stand still'—the arresting opening words of his poem—in order to apply it with the proper detachment. In contrast, I show a kind of sexual philosophy in action, immersed in the phenomena of arousal. Just as Evelyn feared, the higher cognitive faculty mingles with animal and irrational lust, while reason transforms sex from a fixed routine or natural instinct into a fabulous opportunity for experiment and invention, what Chorier called *ingeniosa libido* or *erudita libido*. This school of 'venerian speculation'⁶⁴ competed vigorously with the official idea of philosophy, and education, as a victory over bodily impulse and animal desire.

Competing conceptions of the philosophical life underlie seventeenth-century representations of sexuality, and their opposition can be felt, I hope to show, in even the most scandalous and frivolous texts. Molière's *Les Femmes savantes* allows only two possibilities for the woman, the absurd anti-corporeality of the *précieuses*—'Mariez-vous, ma sœur, à la philosophie'—and the stifling domesticity proposed by the *bon bourgeois* husband, apparently endorsed by the playwright:

Former aux bonnes mœurs l'esprit de ses enfants,
Faire aller son ménage, avoir l'œil sur ses gens,
Et régler la dépense avec économie,
Doit être son étude et sa philosophie.⁶⁵

Forming her children's minds according to good morals, running her household, supervising her staff, and regulating her expenses economically, should be woman's study and philosophy.

But libertinism proposed a third way, making philosophy itself sexual, and vice versa. The Restoration rake celebrates 'this quick-sighted Philosophical Age wherein whoring is improv'd to a liberal Science', a comic version of the 'besoin de savoir insatiable', the 'tactical rationality introduced into sexual relations', that for Claude Reichler constitutes the libertine era.⁶⁶ Even within the same comedy, 'philosophy' can serve as a vehicle and as an impediment to sexual self-realization. In Vanbrugh's *Provoked Wife* (1697), the suffering spouse blames 'old foolish Philosophers' for loading women with 'fine notions of Virtue' that prevent her from taking a lover. Below stairs and in a different accent, meanwhile, the French maid evokes philosophy to justify complete sexual abandon: Lady Fancifull asks with exaggerated horror, 'Why sure you wou'd not sacrifice your Honor to your Pleasure?'; Mademoiselle replies 'Je suis Philosophe.'⁶⁷ The idea of cognitive and erotic co-

⁶⁴ John Davies, *A Scourge for Paper-Persecutors, or Papers Complaint . . . with a Continued Inquisition against Paper-Persecutors*, by A.H. (1624), 3.

⁶⁵ I. i. 44, II. vii. 573–6; Roger Chartier and Dominique Julia, 'L'Éducation des filles', in Chartier, Julia, and Marie-Madeleine Compère, *L'Éducation en France du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1976), 232, compare an almost identical passage in Fénelon's *Traité de l'éducation des filles*.

⁶⁶ Francis Fane, *Love in the Dark* (1675), 14; Reichler, *L'Âge libertin* (Paris, 1987), 59.

⁶⁷ *The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh*, I, ed. Bonamy Dobrée (1927), 117 (I. i), 123 (I. ii); for an earlier version of this point, see my 'Culture of Priapism', 18.

development—shocking in Evelyn’s ‘speculative Lusts’ and amusing in Vanbrugh’s *soubrette philosophe*—mutates into Elisabeth Singer Rowe’s surprisingly sympathetic portrait of the ‘philosophick libertine’, who ‘pursued pleasure for the sake of demonstration’, who paused, reasoned, ‘made critical reflections on every enjoyment’ in a ‘deliberate search after happiness.’⁶⁸

Finally, we should ask what set this libertine-didactic philosophy in motion? Through what cognitive and material channels did it flow, and what conditions in the republic of letters allowed *libido* to become ‘erudite’? Language clearly played a large if paradoxical role. La Rochefoucauld implies a certain scorn for those who can only feel desire if they have heard it constructed in language, as if Dom Juan and his followers were right to promote *faire* over *dire* and ‘action’ over ‘discourse’ (p. 11 above): ‘Il y a des gens qui n’auraient jamais été amoureux s’ils n’avaient jamais entendu parler de l’amour.’⁶⁹ (‘There are people who would never fall in love if they hadn’t heard love talked about.’) But he does at least recognize the constitutive power that his near-namesake Foucault would later elevate to a paradigm, and many contemporaries went further. Chorier ultimately promotes the pleasures of discourse and figuration over the *nausea* of physicality (Ch. 4 below), and Maucroix—who described the sensational effect of Chorier’s dialogue as it ‘ran through Paris’—produced his own libertine twist on linguistic constructionism: ‘f..tez donc, les Belles, f..tez | la vertu n’est que du langage!’ ‘fuck, darlings, fuck, virtue is nothing but language!’⁷⁰

To be most effective, sex talk had to be codified in book form. The apocalyptic preacher might trust that when ‘the Books shall be opened’ all speculative lusts will cease, but back in the Old World it was precisely Books that disseminated them. The very form of the book invoked the intimate crevices of the body, an analogy that still appeals to poets today.⁷¹ Already in the sixteenth century, moralists and gossip-mongers fantasized over the transforming power of ‘Aretino’ and his kind: the modern girl ‘is so nouseled in amorous bookes . . . that she smelleth of naughtinesse even all her life after’, contaminated as if by whore’s milk;⁷² advanced vice manuals ‘translated out of Italian into English, sold in every shop in London’, teach ‘new school points’ for the bedroom, ‘not fond and common ways to vice, but such subtle, cunning, new, and diverse shifts . . . as the simple head of an Englishman is not able to invent.’⁷³ (By 1584 the London printer John Wolfe could also run up authentic-looking editions of the Italian originals.) It is true that sexual writings we might categorize as pornographic were assimilated to the genre of mock-praise.⁷⁴ Far more commonly and persistently, however, they were given a dreadful

⁶⁸ *Letters Moral and Entertaining* (1733), 2nd pagination, 157–8, in *Friendship in Death*, facsimile ed. Josephine Grieder (1972).

⁶⁹ *Maximes*, number 136. ⁷⁰ Ch. 7 nn. 1–2 below.

⁷¹ Cf. Ch. 1 n. 76 below (‘the two-leaved book’) and Robert Pinsky, ‘Book’, *Three Penny Review*, 87 (Fall 2001), 4.

⁷² Edward Hake, cited in Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge, 2000), 43.

⁷³ Roger Ascham, *The Schoolmaster* (1570), ed. Lawrence V. Ryan (Ithaca, NY, 1967), 39, 67–9.

⁷⁴ Sir John Harington, *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596), ed. Elizabeth Story Donno (1962), 63–4, equates his scatological mock-eccomium with Aretino’s *Ragionamenti* and ‘*Puttana errante*’ as well as Erasmus’ *Praise of Folly*.

power to fascinate and corrupt. ‘Loose Aretine flames’ provoke widows to copulate with passive boys or ‘smooth-faced catamites, . . . as if a woman should a woman wed’.⁷⁵ Pepys still cites *La puttana errante* as the benchmark for judging *L’Ecole des filles*,⁷⁶ and Evelyn’s warnings against ‘unnatural figures’ and ‘lewd postures’ do not even need to name their author as Aretino.

The core post-Aretine texts that form the body of this book—listed for convenience in the Abbreviations above—achieved a similar notoriety in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their authors were banished (like the aristocrat Rochester), burned in effigy, or even executed at an early age: Claude Le Petit was burned at the stake for sodomy and obscenity, and the highly cultured Ferrante Pallavicino—recruited by Richelieu to establish an academy for the study of Italian literature—was captured and beheaded by the papal authorities.⁷⁷ Once in print these books were intermittently seized, prosecuted, and incinerated, either publicly by the executioner or privately by furtive consumers like Pepys.⁷⁸ Key books such as *The School of Venus*, *Sodom*, and *Aretinus Redivivus* have vanished completely, except for manuscript copies and selections transcribed into prosecution records; others survive in one single exemplar. (In each case I cite afresh from the original document, undoing the damage caused by defective modern reprints.) At the same time, however, drama and criticism constantly named these notorious titles, booksellers flaunted them openly, and collectors listed them in their libraries, the best set belonging to John Hoyle, the libertine friend of Aphra Behn.⁷⁹ In France, copies of *L’Ecole* were traced to courtiers and ministers; in Holland and England, visitors saw them in the shops.⁸⁰ Even the outrageous *Alcibiade fanciullo*—imitated in libertine literature but not directly cited—appeared in multiple editions, entered elite libraries, and was regularly denounced in learned bibliographies for celebrating ‘the art of sodomy’.⁸¹ Latin classics like Chorier’s *Aloisia Sigea* had an excellent survival rate in gentlemen’s collections; the Bodleian copy of Meibomius on flagellation came from the library of Lord Baden-Powell, author of *Scouting for Boys*.

⁷⁵ Thomas Middleton, cited and analysed in Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (New York, 2000), 158; my terms for this perversion, common throughout the hard-core curriculum and its analogues, are *epheberasty* and *heteropaedophilia*.

⁷⁶ Pepys does not record buying this prose dialogue (identified in Abbreviations above); he may have read it after 1 July 1663, when he confessed that ‘I do not to this day know what is the meaning of this sin [buggery, amply described in *La puttana errante*], nor which is the agent nor which the patient,’ but this may express ontological rather than physiological confusion.

⁷⁷ Laura Coci, *RP*, intro.

⁷⁸ For details see Le Petit, *Cœuvres*, pp. xxv–xliii; Coci, *RP* intro.; Foxon, 7–18, 31–3; and Anne Sauvy, *Livres saisis à Paris entre 1678 et 1701* (The Hague, 1972), *passim*.

⁷⁹ Ch. 5 n. 6 below; cf. Foxon, 9 (one bookseller stocks up with ‘some *Ecole des filles*, *Aloyisiae Zigeae Amores* etc.’ only to be closed down the following year) and ‘The Compleat Auctioneer’, BM Personal and Political Satires, 1415 (‘c.1700’), openly displaying ‘Aretines Post[ures]’, ‘Play of Sodom’, Rochester’s ‘Poems’, ‘Culp Midw’, ‘Arist[otles] Mast[er]piece’, ‘Tulliae Octav’, ‘Sch: of Venus’. Thompson, *Unfit for Modest Ears*, 203–5, tabulates libertine and bawdy books in English libraries pre-1700.

⁸⁰ Pia, p. XXI; Foxon, 9; Wijnand W. Mijnhart, ‘Politics and Pornography in the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic’, in Hunt (ed.), *Invention of Pornography*, 297.

⁸¹ See Coci’s intro. and textual note to *Alcibiade*, esp. 9 n. 7; it also appears in the late-18th-century list of confiscated books cited by Marchi (Epilogue n. 29 below).

Montaigne's contrast between masculine book-learning and the 'discipline' of Nature—to which I now turn, at the threshold of Chapter 1—raises the fundamental question, who reads these texts and for what purpose? Montaigne assumes that men are the primary consumers of eroto-didactic literature, and identifies as its real concern the male need for sexual instruction, for self-fashioning through 'study'; nevertheless, its principal subject is female learning. Titles like *The School of Venus* or *The Ladies Delight Reduced into Rules of Practice* remind us that, ever since Nanna trained her daughter Pippa in Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, most pornography took the form of an initiatory dialogue between two women. Imaginary reception-scenes assume that women themselves read and apply these texts. Thomas Carew's 'Rapture' imagines Lucretia 'studying' the works of Aretino, transforming herself into a product of his text, and Restoration dramatists imagine women secretly compiling their own didactic library, lining their studies with *Aristotle's Problems*, '*Lescholle de Files*, a pretty French book', and '*Annotations upon Aretines Postures*, three Excellent Books for a Ladies Chamber'.⁸² The emphasis falls on the first element in Montaigne's oxymoron, 'the schoolmaster Nature'—though the *maître* wears drag in every version except the openly homosexual *Alcibiade*. In her indignant feminist counterblast *The Female Advocate* Sarah Fyge contrasts the virtuous woman, self-constructed by 'Rule' and 'Precept', to the slanderous image projected by libertines and satirists, fashionably seductive, sexually advanced, and therefore sexually defined. Echoing the title of the *Escole* translation, Fyge points out that the ostensibly hedonist-naturalist woman is equally 'reduced to rules of practice', equally confined by a didactic institution, and rather more coerced to conform to male interests: 'They would have all bred up in *Venus School*.'⁸³

⁸² *The Poems of Thomas Carew, with his Masque Coelum Britannicum*, ed. Rhodes Dunlap (Oxford, 1949), 52; John Learnerd, *The Rambling Justice* (1678), 51 (iv. vi).

⁸³ n. 19 above.

