



The Telling of the Act: Sexuality As Narrative in Eighteenth- And Nineteenth-Century France

Peter Cryle

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This book tells how the diverting array of pleasures in eighteenth-century libertine fiction gave way, through a process of thematic drift and realignment, to a powerfully linear story that actually defined sex and the gender roles pertaining to it. Many of the key notions in modern talk about sex are in fact narrative ones: "climax," "foreplay," and "the sex act" are all said to lie at the heart of human sexuality. But 'The Telling of the Act' questions whether these notions deserve to be thought of as timeless, and in fact locates their emergence in the second half of the eighteenth century.

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