



Prose Poems of the French Enlightenment

Delimiting Genre

Fabienne Moore, University of Oregon, USA



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By examining nearly sixty works, Fabienne Moore traces the prehistory of the French prose poem, demonstrating that the disquiet of some eighteenth-century writers with the Enlightenment gave rise to the genre nearly a century before it is habitually supposed to have existed. In the throes of momentous scientific, philosophical, and socioeconomic changes, Enlightenment authors turned to the past to revive sources such as Homer, the pastoral, Ossian, the Bible, and primitive eloquence, favoring music to construct alternatives to the world of reason. The result, Moore argues, were prose poems, including Fénelon's *Les Aventures de Télémaque*, Montesquieu's *Le Temple de Gnide*, Rousseau's *Le Lévitte d'Ephraïm*, Chateaubriand's *Atala*, as well as many lesser-known texts, most of which remain out of print. Moore's treatment of Bible criticism and eighteenth-century religious reform movements reveal the often-neglected spiritual side of Enlightenment culture, and tracks its contribution to the period's reflection about language and poetic invention. Moore includes in appendices four unusual texts adjudicating the merits of prose poems, making evidence of their controversial nature now accessible to readers.

Contents

Introduction; Off limits: prose poems of the French enlightenment; Telemacomania; Prose vs. poetry; Birth of the poem in prose; Translation to the rescue; Back to the Bible; The Reformation; New rhythms; Conclusion; Appendixes; Bibliography; Index

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