



Gender and Voice in the French Novel, 1730-1782

Aurora Wolfgang

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Analyzing four best-selling novels - by both women and men - written in the feminine voice, this book traces how the creation of women-centered salons and the emergence of a feminine poetic style engendered a new type of literature in eighteenth-century France. The author argues that writing in a female voice allowed writers of both sexes to break with classical notions of literature and style, so that they could create a modern sensibility that appealed to a larger reading public, and gave them scope to innovate with style and form. Wolfgang brings to light how the 'female voice' in literature came to embody the language of sociability, but also allowed writers to explore the domain of inter-subjectivity, while creating new bonds between writers and the reading public. Through examination of Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne*, Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Peruvienne*, Riccoboni's *Lettres de Mistriss Fanni Butlerd*, and Laclos's *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, she shows that in France, this modern 'feminine' sensibility turned the least prestigious of literary genres - the novel - into the most compelling and innovative literary form of the eighteenth century. Emphasizing how the narratives analyzed here refashioned the French literary world through their linguistic innovation and expression of new forms of subjectivity, this study claims an important role for feminine-voice narratives in shaping the field of eighteenth-century literature.

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