



Tempting the poor, a recurring narrative sequence in French novels of the Enlightenment

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Abstract: Stories of temptation are numerous in eighteenth-century novels portraying the poor: women being tempted to sacrifice their virtue, men to renounce their honesty in exchange for money. An analysis of these codified narrative sequences shows that behind the apparent triumph of virtue hides a strong moral tension, revealing profound social hypocrisy. Through corrosive fictionality, the foundations of the moral system are therefore stripped bare.

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