



The American Prose Poem: Poetic Form and the Boundaries of Genre

Michel Delville

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"Excellent . . . the only critical book on prose poetry that not only provides a historical background for the prose poem in English, but also focuses on contemporary American prose poets."--Peter Johnson, Providence College

The American prose poem has a rich history marked by important contributions from major writers. Michel Delville's book is the first full-length work to provide a critical and historical survey of the American prose poem from the early years of the 20th century to the 1990s.

Delville reassesses the work of established prose poets in relation to the history of modern poetry and introduces writings by some whose work in the form has so far escaped mainstream critical attention (Sherwood Anderson, Kenneth Patchen, Russell Edson). He describes the genre's European origins and the work of several early representatives of a modern tradition of the prose lyric (Charles Baudelaire, Max Jacob, Franz Kafka, and James Joyce).

By applying a broad range of theory to the history of the prose poem, Delville adds evidence to its reputation as a norm-breaking form by writing within, against, and across existing genres and traditions. He shows that the history of the contemporary prose poem is, in many respects, the record of its efforts to question both the nature of the "poetic" or "lyric" mode and the aesthetic and ideological foundations of a variety of other genres and subgenres.

Michel Delville teaches at the University of Liège, Belgium, and is a senior research assistant at the National Fund for Scientific Research in Brussels. He is author of a study of J. G. Ballard and of articles on contemporary English and American literature.

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