



The Attraction of the Contrary: Essays on the Literature of the French Enlightenment

Walter E. Rex

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The essays in this 1987 volume are concerned with ideas of contrariness and other kinds of polar opposition in French literature of the eighteenth century. Originally these ideas were merely part of an impulse to undermine the establishment, but as the century progressed the desire to invert social values and question accepted norms merged with the main groundswell of the age to form part of the movement of Revolution. Professor Rex considers some of the major writers of the period: Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Beaumarchais. He also explores minor genres such as opéras comiques, theatrical parodies, and erotic or pornographic pieces; these have been largely forgotten, but in their time they imbued the creative life of the era with vitality. In treating the literature in relation to the other arts, especially painting and music, these essays will be of interest to scholars of all aspects of eighteenth-century French culture.

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