

The culmination of a lifetimes fascination with humor in all its forms, this book is the first in any language to embrace such an impressive span of authors and such a broad range of topics in French literary humor. In nine wide-ranging chapters Walter Redfern considers diverse writers and topics, including: Diderot, viewed as a laughing philosopher, mainly through his fiction (*Les Bijoux indiscrets*, *Le Neveu de Rameau*, and *Jacques le fataliste*); humorlessness, corraling Rousseau, Sade, the Christian God, and Jean-Pierre Brisset; the aesthete Huysmans, in both his avatars, Symbolist and Naturalist (*A Rebours*, *Sac au dos*, and other texts); the dramatic use of parrots by Flaubert, Queneau, and Beckett; Valles and *la blague*; exaggeration in Valles and Celine (*Mort a credit* and *L'Enfant*); the fiction, plays, and autobiography of Sartre; bad jokes in Beckett; wordplay in Tourniers fiction (especially *Roi des aulnes* and *Les Meteores*). Five interleaved riffs on laughter, dreams, black humor, politics, and taste, carry the enquiry into questions of humor outside of the purely French context, enhancing a book that impresses as much with its vivacity of style as with the breadth and depth of its scholarship.

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