



The Writing of Melancholy: Modes of Opposition in Early French Modernism

Ross Chambers

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Ross Chambers, an eminent critic of French literature, proposes an original theory of the development of French modernism. His work brings together practical criticism, textual theory, and historical analysis to fashion a new way of thinking about writing and reading as they intersect with history. Along the way, Chambers offers brilliant readings of texts from *Madame Bovary* to *Les Fleurs du mal*.

After the failed revolution of 1848, the sense of disillusion that swept through France deeply affected the literature of the time. Chambers argues that literary melancholy and disorientation constituted a symptom of historical conditions rather than, as many other critics contend, a willful resistance to them.

Enriched by careful readings of works by Flaubert, Nerval, Baudelaire, Gautier, and Hugo, this book is a subtle meditation on the powers of writing and reading and a suggestive contribution to current debates over the historical status of literary texts. Originally published in French, the book has been revised and expanded to include a new chapter on Gérard de Nerval's "Sylvie."

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