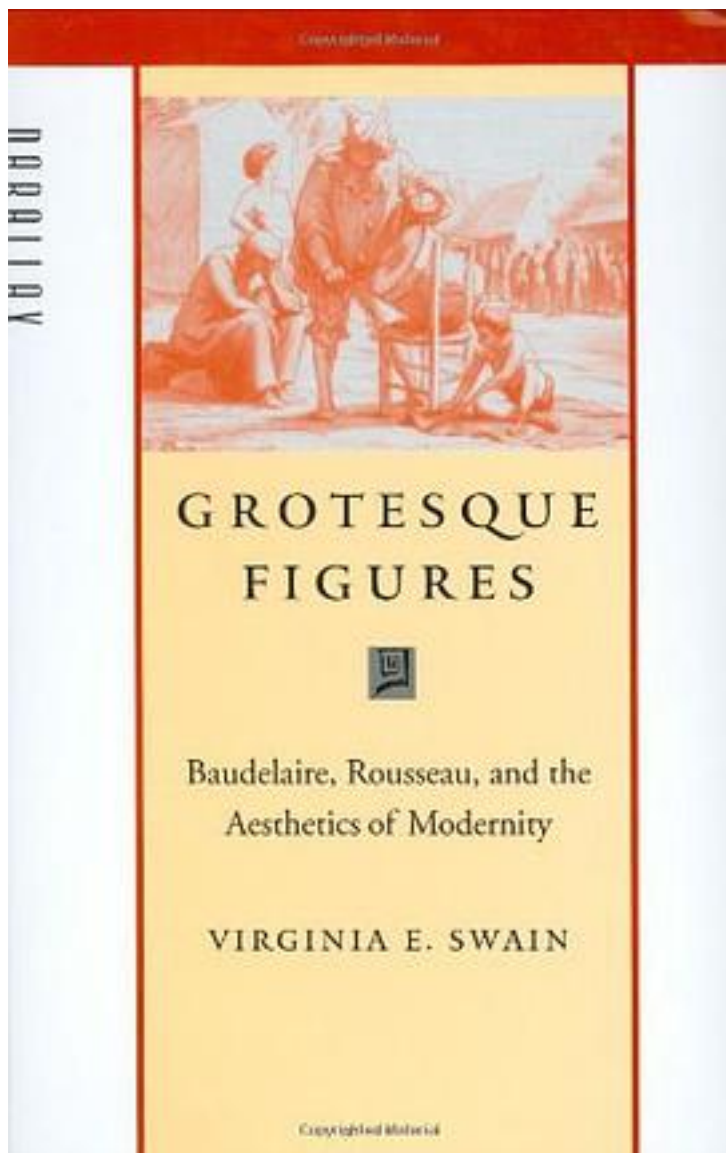


Grotesque Figures



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Charles Baudelaire is usually read as a paradigmatically modern poet, whose work ushered in a new era of French literature. But the common emphasis on his use of new forms and styles overlooks the complex role of the past in his work. In *Grotesque Figures*, Virginia E. Swain explores how the specter of the eighteenth century made itself felt in Baudelaire's modern poetry in the pervasive textual and figural presence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Not only do Rousseau's ideas inform Baudelaire's theory of the grotesque, but Rousseau makes numerous appearances in Baudelaire's poetry as a caricature or type representing the hold of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution over Baudelaire and his contemporaries. As a character in "Le Poeme du hashisch" and the *Petits Poemes en prose*, "Rousseau" gives the grotesque a human form. Swain's literary, cultural, and historical analysis deepens our understanding of Baudelaire and of nineteenth-century aesthetics by relating Baudelaire's poetic theory and practice to Enlightenment debates about allegory and the grotesque in the arts. Offering a novel reading of Baudelaire's ambivalent engagement with the eighteenth-century, *Grotesque Figures* examines nineteenth-century ideological debates over French identity, Rousseau's political and artistic legacy, the aesthetic and political significance of the rococo, and the presence of the grotesque in the modern.

作者介绍:

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