



A Wicked Company: The Forgotten Radicalism of the European Enlightenment

Philipp Blom

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A Wicked Company tells the remarkable story of Baron Thierry Holbach's Parisian salon, an epicenter of freethinking that brought together the greatest minds of the 18th century. Over wine-soaked dinner parties, the finest intellectuals of the Western world—figures such as Denis Diderot, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, David Hume, Adam Smith, Horace Walpole, and Benjamin Franklin-matched wits and scandalized one another with their own ever-more-provocative ideas. Writers of genius all, full of wit and courage (but also personal contradictions, doubts, conflicts of conscience, and their fair share of open arguments and love affairs), this group of friends embodied an astonishing radicalism in European thought, so uncompromising and bold that its bracing, liberating, humanist vision has still not been fully realized. As acclaimed historian Philipp Blom shows, these thinkers' analysis of our culture remains as valid as it was then, and has lost little of its potential to shock—or to force us to confront with new eyes debates about our society and its future.



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