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Erasmus Darwin: Sex, Science, and Serendipity

By Fara, Patricia.

Oxford. 1 Cloth(s), 2012. hard. Book Condition: New. The world, wrote Charles Darwin, resembles "one great slaughter-house, one universal scene of rapacity and injustice." Surprisingly, that nutshell image of competitive natural selection originated not with Charles but with his grandfather Erasmus, who possessed, according to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "perhaps a greater range of knowledge than any other man in Europe," and who wrote about evolution long before Charles was born. Here the author of *Science: A Four Thousand Year History* and *Newton: The Making of Genius* uncovers a brilliant botanist and inventor who penned breathtakingly long poems explaining his theories about sex and science. But his radical views on the abolition of slavery, the education of women, and the optimistic ideals of the French Revolution invoked the ire and ridicule of the political classes and the satirists of the day. 322.



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