



"Coming to Writing" and Other Essays

By Helene Cixous, Susan Rubin Suleiman

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This collection presents six essays by one of France's most remarkable contemporary authors. A notoriously playful stylist, Cixous here explores how the problematics of the sexes--viewed as a paradigm for all difference, which is the organizing principle behind identity and meaning--manifest themselves, write themselves, in texts.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

The tradition of Cixous's interest in feminine writing and talent at manipulating words continues in this collection. She describes vividly how she was overcome by the intoxication of writing: " 'Writing' seized me, gripped me, between the stomach and the chest, a blast dilated my lungs and I stopped breathing." Other essays explore the influence of music and gender on writing ("Tancredi Continues") and painting ("The Last Painting, or the Portrait of God"). In all cases the language is visual and jewel-like, sparkling with color. Three essays analyze the ongoing influence of the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector on her work. Introductory and closing essays by Susan Suleiman and editor Jenson illuminate Cixous's accomplishments. For academic libraries. See also Cixous's *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva*, reviewed below.--Ed.

- *Ann Sapp, Montgomery Cty. Dept. of Public Libs., Md.*

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Review

The tradition of Cixous's interest in feminine writing and talent at manipulating words continues in this collection. [In one essay] she describes vividly how she was overcome by the intoxication of writing...Other essays explore the influence of music and gender on writing...and painting. In all cases the language is visual and jewel-like, sparkling with color. (*Library Journal*)

Hélène Cixous is today, in my view, the greatest writer in what I will call my language, the French language if you like. And I am weighing my words as I say that. For a great writer must be a poet-thinker, very much a poet and a very thinking poet. (Jacques Derrida)

Deborah Jenson judiciously selects from Cixous's output between 1976-89 'Coming to Writing,' 'Clarice Lispector: The Approach,' 'Tancredi continues,' 'The Last Painting or the Portrait of God,' 'By the Light of an Apple,' and 'The Author in Truth.' Her perceptive closing essay, together with Susan Suleiman's introduction...trace the umbilical links between Cixous's end-stopped poetic-philosophic prose and her roots which anchor her perilously between two holocausts, Jewish and colonial, and two tongues, German and the classical French...These essays highlight a wealth of disparate inspiration...[in] an ideal guide to Cixous. (Elizabeth Moles *Times Higher Education Supplement [UK]*)

Cixous, important as she is as a feminist theorist and activist, is equally important as an accurate emotional sounding board for women everywhere. As such, her articulation of powerful, if delicate, perceptions in lucid prose/poetry compels the attention of European and American readers...The power of her prose is philosophically sound. (*Choice*)

Review

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--Jacques Derrida

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