



Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History (Religion and Postmodernism)

Amy Hollywood

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Sensible Ecstasy investigates the attraction to excessive forms of mysticism among twentieth-century French intellectuals and demonstrates the work that the figure of the mystic does for these thinkers. With special attention to Georges Bataille, Simone de Beauvoir, Jacques Lacan, and Luce Irigaray, Amy Hollywood asks why resolutely secular, even anti-Christian intellectuals are drawn to affective, bodily, and widely denigrated forms of mysticism.

What is particular to these thinkers, Hollywood reveals, is their attention to forms of mysticism associated with women. They regard mystics such as Angela of Foligno, Hadewijch, and Teresa of Avila not as emotionally excessive or escapist, but as unique in their ability to think outside of the restrictive oppositions that continue to afflict our understanding of subjectivity, the body, and sexual difference. Mystics such as these, like their twentieth-century descendants, bridge the gaps between action and contemplation, emotion and reason, and body and soul, offering new ways of thinking about language and the limits of representation.

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