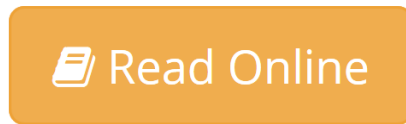


English Is Broken Here: Notes on Cultural Fusion in the Americas

By Coco Fusco



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When Coco Fusco and collaborator Guillermo Gomez-Pena toured the country in a cage as "authentic natives," their provocative performance piece enraged some and enthralled others. Known for using performance to explore the boundaries of ethnicity in art, Coco Fusco has now brought her talents to bear in a volume of cultural criticism and theory, *English is Broken Here*. Infused with a unique cultural sensibility, *English is Broken Here* examines cross-cultural art issues in America at a crucial moment. Coco Fusco adds an original and eloquent voice to a growing debate over cultural identity and visual politics.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Cultural critic Fusco undermines notions of a monolithic Latino identity by examining the role of race in a broad spectrum of Latin American, U.S. and (to a lesser extent) British black and Latino culture and art. She puts together an illuminating pastiche of autobiographical political essays and art criticism along with transcripts of performance pieces developed in collaboration with performance artist and poet Guillermo Gomez-Peña. Points that seem obscure in the more theoretical pieces are made concrete in essays on specific artists' work and in satirical radio scripts. Fusco occasionally relies on postmodernist jargon, but it is for the most part not impenetrable. The strongest element by far is Fusco's writing on the work of artists Andres Serrano, Pepon Osorio, Lorna Simpson, Graciela Iturbide, Lourdes Grobet, Yolanda Andrade, Juan Sanchez, Ana Mendieta, Catalina Parra and the film collectives Black Audio and Sankofa. Her account of appearing in a cage with Gomez-Peña in a performance piece titled Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit... also stands out—it is simultaneously chilling and riotously funny. Photos not seen by PW.

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From [Booklist](#)

As the daughter of Cuban immigrants, Coco Fusco discusses why those who are ethnically Cuban but reside elsewhere still feel passionately about their homeland. This work includes her study of these intense feelings and discussions about other cultural issues related to being a person of color, especially Latino, in white society. Essays about contemporary artists Lorna Simpson, Pepo Osorio, and Juan Sanchez are featured, as are interviews with Andres Serrano and Guillermo Gomez-Peña. Serrano's photographs, along with those by Robert Mapplethorpe, ignited the far right's indignation toward NEA grant recipients. With Gomez-Peña, Fusco co-wrote two scripts that were broadcast on National Public Radio. Especially provoking is their collaboration on "The Couple in the Cage," a performance-art piece in which they pretended to be Amerindians from an undiscovered island. Exhibited in a cage and dressed in primitive garb, the couple appeared in several museums. They kept records of the public's reactions on a laptop computer incongruously used during their time in the cage. The essay about their experiences also includes a listing of various "ethnographic exhibitions of human beings," from Christopher Columbus to 20th-century circus displays. *Jennifer Henderson*

Review

[Fusco's] brilliant collection of essays, interviews, and performance pieces. . . offers multilayered artistic and cultural commentary along with refreshingly clear-eyed political acuity.

—*SAN FRANCISCO BAY GUARDIAN*

An important document marking the raging debate of multiculturalism in these times.

—*LA WEEKLY*

Simultaneously chilling and riotously funny.

—*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY*

Essential reading.

—*THE NATION*

Users Review

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