



Herbarium/Verbarium: The Discourse of Flowers (Texts and Contexts)

Claudette Sartillot

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As poetic symbols or scientific models, flowers have often been invoked to explain nature's harmonizing of expression, attraction, and reproduction. Words can lie, but flowers seem to speak plainly nature's own language. Flowers thrive as both botanical and literary phenomena in the works of Goethe, Rousseau, and Ruskin and serve as essential points of reference for Rilke, Proust, Genet, Ponge, Cixous, Derrida, and many others.

This book explores the links between the flowers of nature and the flowers of metaphor. No longer rooted in a system of symbols, as they have been in many times and cultures, the flowers of modern literature are ambiguous and changeable. As examples of nature's finery and plenitude they justify not only finery and plenitude, but also questions and contradictions. They are flagrantly colorful or delicate and secretive.

Yet throughout the Western traditional flowers have most frequently been considered feminine by male and female writers alike. It is this attachment that Sartillot pursues to the end, questioning the place of flowers in Cixous's writings and in contemporary feminism.



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