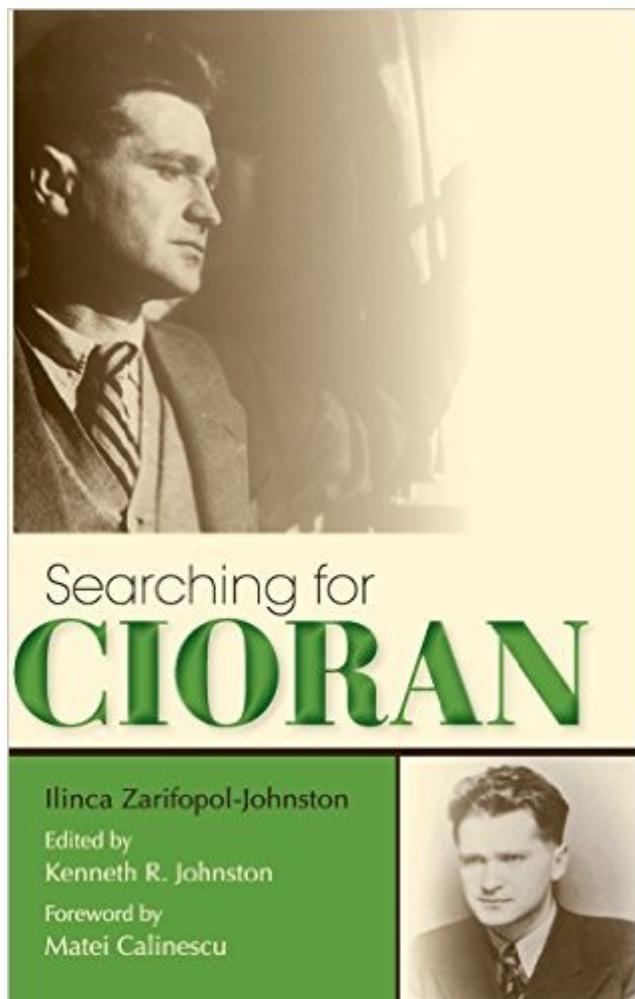


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Searching For Cioran



Synopsis

Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston's critical biography of the Romanian-born French philosopher E. M. Cioran focuses on his crucial formative years as a mystical revolutionary attracted to right-wing nationalist politics in interwar Romania, his writings of this period, and his self-imposed exile to France in 1937. This move led to his transformation into one of the most famous French moralists of the 20th century. As an enthusiast of the anti-rationalist philosophies widely popular in Europe during the first decades of the 20th century, Cioran became an advocate of the fascistic Iron Guard. In her quest to understand how Cioran and other brilliant young intellectuals could have been attracted to such passionate national revival movements, Zarifopol-Johnston, herself a Romanian emigré, sought out the aging philosopher in Paris in the early 1990s and retraced his steps from his home village of Rasinari and youthful years in Sibiu, through his student years in Bucharest and Berlin, to his early residence in France. Her portrait of Cioran is complemented by an engaging autobiographical account of her rediscovery of her own Romanian past.

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Customer Reviews

If you have read any of Cioran's books and been astonished by them, by their relentless spirit of twilight negativity and acerbic melancholy, if you have marveled at this man who writes in such a personally lyrical and at the same time perversely declarative manner, then this book will be a most welcome addition to your understanding of whatever you might have read of this Romanian author's works and been left to ponder. Almost all of Cioran's works are now available in English translation

(with the sole exceptions of his 1930s political tract "Romania's Transfiguration" and the "Cahiers" (Notebooks), but until the appearance of this book penned by Ilinca Zarifopol-Johnston, the capable translator of his Romanian-language works who sadly died in 2005, and which in turn was completed by her husband, Kenneth Johnston, there was for English-language readers nothing like a biography or a critical study of his work that was intended for general audiences. Prior to that, if you wanted to know anything about Cioran's life or intellectual development, then you had to cobble together the scraps provided in some of the introductions accompanying the translated works or wade through a handful of ponderous academic monographs not always written in English. This book is still not a full and comprehensive study of Cioran's life or his output as a writer since it focuses on the early Cioran, from his birth in 1911 to the time of his departure from Romania and arrival in the West, taking him through Germany and finally to Paris, where he would spend the rest of his life from 1937 until his death in 1995, but it is a marvelous study in its own right full of critical insights and sympathetic enough examinations of the man's own inner workings and authorial obsessions.

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