

Book review

The Importance of Being Iceland

By Eileen Myles. Semiotext(e), \$17.95 paperback.



Eileen Myles's writing has always captured both the content and the rhythms of a mind on the move, and her latest collection of essays, *The Importance of Being Iceland*, reveals just how far that mind is willing to travel. Though best known as a poet and novelist, Myles here reveals that her nonfiction is just as capable of the winning jump-cut, the mid-sentence change of topic. She opens the title piece with a meditation on class, moves on to a discussion of 20th-century author Robert Walser and then winds up in Iceland. Some of the less classifiable essays emerge as chaotic and charismatic monologues: "Everyday Barf"—a rage against mundanity—meditates on mothers, lesbianism and vomit. Other pieces find Myles playing critic or paying tribute, writing about Björk, filmmaker Peggy Ahwesh, and the poets Alice Notley and James Schuyler. These writings confidently wander and always cohere, held together not just by the author's singular intelligence but by her ability to exude personality on the page.—*Michael Miller*

Myles reads at [Spoonbill & Sugartown Booksellers](#) Tue 15.

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