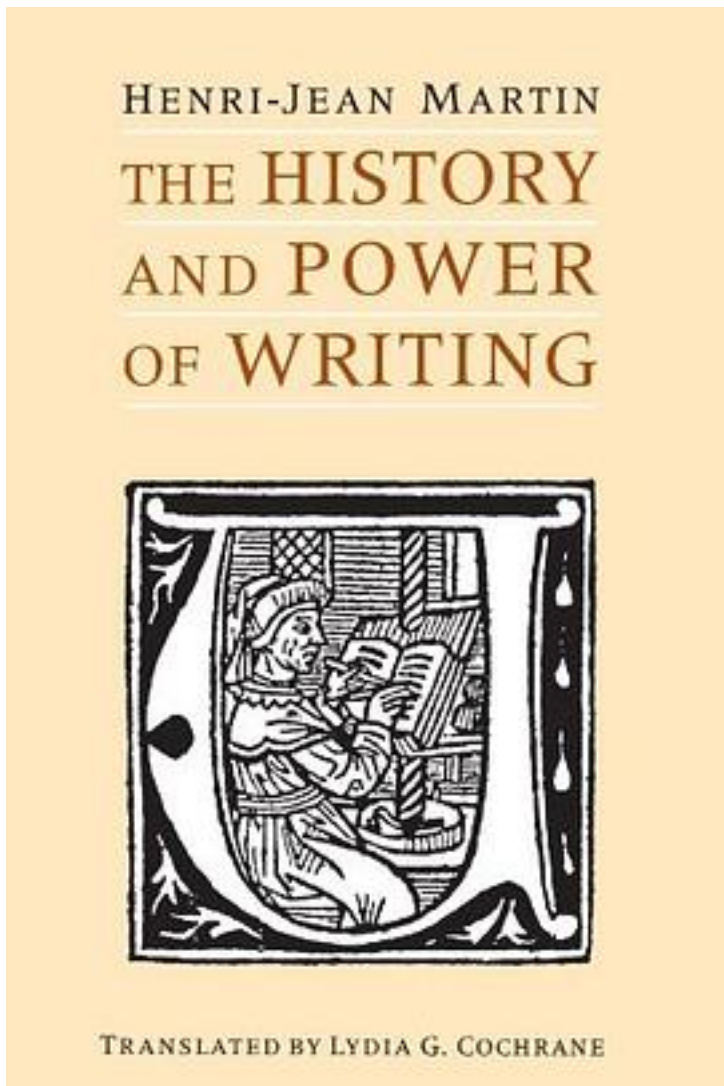


The History and Power of Writing



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This study is the story of writing from its very beginnings to its recent transformations through technology. Traversing four millennia, Martin offers a chronicle of writing as a cultural system, a means of communication and a history of technologies. He shows how the written word originated, how it spread and how it figured in the evolution of civilization. Using as his centre the role of printing in making the written way of thinking dominant, Martin examines the interactions of individuals and cultures to produce new forms of "writing" in the many senses of authorship, language rendition and script. Martin looks at how much the development of writing owed to practical necessity, and how much to religious and social systems of symbols. He describes the precursors to writing and reveals their place in early civilization as devices in service of the spoken word. The tenacity of the oral tradition plays an important part in this story as, even as late as the 18th century, educated individuals were trained in classical rhetoric and preferred to rely on the arts of memory. Finally, Martin discusses the changes to writing wrought by the electronic revolution, offering insights into the influence these new technologies have had on children born into the computer age.

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