



Jean Genet (Reaktion Books - Critical Lives)

Stephen Barber

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An engaging and challenging introduction to Jean Genet, this concise biography of the French writer and his work cuts directly to the intersection of thought and life that was essential to Genet's creativity. Arguing that Genet's life was an extraordinary spectacle in which the themes of his most revolutionary works were played out, Stephen Barber gives both the work and its singular inspiration in Genet's life their full due.

Abandoned, arrested, and repeatedly incarcerated, Genet, who died in 1986, led a life that could best be described as a tour of the underworld of the twentieth century.

Similarly, Genet's work is recognized by its nearly obsessive and often savage treatment of certain recurring themes. Sex, desire, death, oppression, domination—these ideas, central to Genet's artistic project, can be seen as preoccupations that arose directly from the artist's travels, imprisonments, sexual and emotional relationships, and political engagements and protests. This trenchant volume focuses directly on the moments in Genet's life in which those preoccupations are vividly projected in his novels, theater works, and film projects.

Genet's works have been hugely influential for a vast array of writers, filmmakers, choreographers, and directors, especially at moments of social crisis; thus Genet's life is not only at the root of his own work but also that of many important artists of the twentieth century. With its frank and illuminating introduction by Edmund White, *Jean Genet* gives readers access to this brilliant and brutal mind.

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