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Jean Genet's significance within twentieth-century theatre has long been understated. This timely book, the only introductory text in English to Genet's plays in production, presents an overview of an influential and controversial writer whose work prefigured many recent postmodern and post-colonial developments in theatre and performance studies.

The volume offers philosophical, historical, political and aesthetic readings of Genet's plays in order to render the complexity of his theatre exhilarating, rather than intimidating. It goes on to explore ways in which different directors, designers and actors have approached his writing. A spectrum of productions spanning 60 years, from 1947 to 2007, illustrates the sheer range of theatrical styles that Genet's texts inspire.

Reflecting on his early life and later political activism as well as the key plays, David Bradby and Clare Finburgh provide a comprehensive discussion of a playwright and theorist whose work caused riots in France, and whose writing represents a unique synthesis of life and art.