



Leo Spitzer: Essays on Seventeenth-Century French Literature (Cambridge Studies in French)

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The undisputed master of stylistic criticism, Leo Spitzer combined phenomenal learning in historical and comparative linguistics with brilliant and original critical insight. He was born in Vienna in 1887. He studied Romance Philology at the Universities of Vienna and Paris and then taught at Vienna, Bonn, Marburg and Cologne. After escaping from Germany in 1933, he taught briefly at Istanbul and then at The Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. He died in 1960. He was the author of over 800 books, articles, reviews and notes on the language and literatures of France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Germany, England and America from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. This translation brings together for the first time in any language all of Spitzer's work on the literature of seventeenth-century France, including 'Racine's classical piano' (1928) and 'Saint-Simon's portrait of Louis XIV' (1928). Each of the essays demonstrates in practical rather than theoretical terms the essential unity of literary and linguistic study. David Bellos's introduction sets Spitzer's method of textual and stylistic interpretation in its historical context and sketches out the career of this supremely knowledgeable reader for whom knowledge was less important than understanding.

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