

Wallace Stevens: A Literary Life (Literary Lives)

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Wallace Stevens, one of this century's foremost American poets, has been both praised and blamed for the "difficulty" of his poems and has bemused those seeking to reconcile the sobriety of his career as an insurance lawyer with the extravagance of his poetry. In this book, Tony Sharpe explores the symbiotic and antagonistic relations between Stevens' literary life and his working life as senior executive. He outlines the personal, historical, and publishing contexts which shaped his writing career, and suggests how awareness of these contexts sheds new light on the poems. Stevens was uncompromising in his insistence on the extraordinary importance of poetry to the ordinary world, and in this appreciative but not uncritical study, Sharpe tries to see the man behind the mandarin, while seeking not to simplify the sumptuous austerities of a major modernist writer.

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