



Terrible Beauty: A Cultural History of the Twentieth Century: The People and Ideas that Shaped the Modern Mind: A History

By Peter Watson

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A history of the twentieth century which covers all the ideas, people, great events, literary and artistic movements, scientific discoveries which have shaped the twentieth century. Terrible Beauty presents a unique narrative of the twentieth century. Unlike more conventional histories, where the focus is on political events and personalities, on wars, treaties and elections, this book concentrates on the ideas that made the century so rich, rewarding and provocative. Beginning with four seminal ideas which were introduced in 1900 - the unconscious, the gene, the quantum and Picasso's first paintings in Paris - the book brings together the main areas of thought and juxtaposes the most original and influential ideas of our time in an immensely readable narrative. From the creation of plastic to Norman Mailer, from the discovery of the 'Big Bang' to the Counterculture, from Relativity to Susan Sontag, from Proust to Salman Rushdie, and Henri Bergson to Saul Bellow, the book's range is encyclopedic. We meet in these pages the other twentieth century, the writers, the artists, the scientists and philosophers who were not cowed by the political and military disasters raging around them, and produced some of the most amazing and rewarding ideas by which we live. Terrible Beauty, endlessly stimulating and provocative, affirms that there was much more to the twentieth century than war and genocide.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Peter Watson was born in 1943 and educated at the universities of Durham, London and Rome. He was deputy editor of New Society and spent four years as part of the 'Insight' team of The Sunday Times. He was New York correspondent of The Times and has written for the Observer, The New York Times, Punch and The Spectator. He is the author of thirteen books and has presented several television programmes about the arts. Since 1998 he has been a Research Associate at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, at the University of Cambridge.

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