



Stephen Spender: A Life in Modernism

David Leeming

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The first critical biography of one of the twentieth century's towering literary figures.

Stephen Spender was a minor poet, but a major cultural influence during much of the century. Literary critic, journalist, art critic, social commentator, and friend of the best-known cultural figures of the modernist and postmodernist periods (Yeats, Woolf, Sartre, Auden, Eliot, Isherwood, Hughes, Brodsky, Ginsberg—a "who's who" of contemporary literature). Spender's writing recorded and distilled the emotional turbulence of many of the century's defining moments: the Spanish Civil War; the rise and fall of Marxism and Nazism; World War II; the human rights struggle after the war; the Vietnam protest, the Cold War, and the 1960s sexual revolution; the rise of America as a cultural and political force. As David Leeming's fascinating biography demonstrates, Stephen Spender's life reflected the complexity and flux of the century in which he lived: his sexual ambivalence, his famous friends, the free-love days in Germany between the wars, the CIA-Encounter scandal. In David Leeming's capable hands, this comprehensive, unauthorized study of Spender is a meditation on modernity itself.

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