

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 friendend 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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