The autobiography is a genre which has started receiving critical attention only recently, and in undertaking this study I am very much aware of the difficulties inherent in the task. Although I may not have been able to match the complexity and the refinement of the English and American theoreticians, I have made an attempt to follow the main line of argument in the field and to arrive at a point of view which I hope is adequate to examine the autobiographical material in my chosen area.

The three autobiographies which I have examined in detail — Edwin Muir's *An Autobiography*, Stephen Spender's *World Within World* and C. Day Lewis's *The Buried Day* — are governed by a unity of background and of literary ethos, in so far as all the three are writers whose formative years were steeped in the climate of the 'thirties. In the process, I have been able to test some of the assumptions underlying the recent speculations on this, perhaps the most fascinating of literary forms, lying as it does on the border-line between the fictional and non-fictional modes of literary discourse.

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