



The Girl from the Fiction Department: A Portrait of Sonia Orwell

Hilary Spurling

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Here is the real "Julia" from *1984*--George Orwell's wife and widow Sonia, in all her sadness, splendor, and ferocity. "A full and fascinating portrait of a complex, strong, and puzzling personality." --*Literary Review*.

The portrait of George Orwell's second wife drawn by his biographers is a travesty. Determined to set the record straight, her friend, biographer Hilary Spurling, reveals the whole story of Sonia Orwell's sad and splendid life.

Beautiful, intelligent, and idealistic, Sonia was the model for Julia, heroine of Orwell's *1984*. Her friends and admirers included W. H. Auden, Lucian Freud, and Francis Bacon. She was Cyril Connolly's indispensable assistant on the influential literary magazine *Horizon* during the 1940s, and in the '60s she co-edited the groundbreaking four-volume collection of Orwell's nonfiction writings.

But after the failure of her second marriage, Sonia's life began to go wrong, ending in penury and despair due to the burden unwittingly placed on her by George Orwell at his death. Some have since seen her as a mythical heroine; others have depicted her as mean and mercenary. Spurling portrays the real Sonia Orwell in all her generous, spirited, ferocious, and self-doubting complexity.

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