



Lytton Strachey: The New Biography

Michael Holroyd

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"It is impossible to suppose that this 'Life' will ever be superseded . . . the best literary biography to appear for many years."—John Rothenstein, *New York Times* "Written with vivacity and scrupulousness. . . .

[Michael Holroyd] has a great novelist's sense of the obstinate mystery of the human person."—George Steiner, *The New Yorker*

Lytton Strachey: The New Biography Details

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Author : Michael Holroyd

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From Reader Review Lytton Strachey: The New Biography for online ebook

Toni says

If you want to live where lives are lived read this book. It comes with the highest credentials and is utterly captivating, enthralling. I do congratulate the author, if that is not an impertinence. I am reviewing from the old 1972 Penguin revised edition.

Aida Ghazar says

Although I could not find the 1st volume in the library! but I enjoyed so much the 2nd volume ,and I do not know what should I read after such a book,
"Lytton's quote: The phoenix will re-rise ,eventually"..."One must never confuse a people with its politicians. I love the English for all the qualities they have in common with Falstaff, not for the qualities they have in common with Cromwell"

Paul Bryant says

I just got this. Years ago I read the original which was published in 1971. It was hugely controversial because it revealed what a polymorphously perverse bunch the Bloomsburies were. I was completely smitten by Carrington who was surely a flower child thirty years too early. Anyhow, time passed and it became more acceptable to reveal details of people's sexuality, and what with Lytton being gay and all, Holroyd dug up so much extra info that he got to the point where he knew he should rewrite his monster bio. So he did. I look forward to reacquainting myself with Lytton who is a completely endearing character.

Andrew Rostan says

One of the greatest biographies ever written.

And one which only gets better and richer upon rereading.

Strachey should be more of an icon than he is. He was one of the greatest prose stylists who ever lived...and more importantly for the world at large, a proud gay man and conscientious objector when the former was a crime and the latter might as well have been.

The quality that Holroyd brings out most in this book is one which I find all too rarely in biographies...a need for friendship. He documents the shifting nature of Strachey's lifelong friendships, most notably his bond with his onetime fiancee Virginia Woolf, the establishment of new ones, the breaking of old ones, and most of all, his efforts as ceaseless as his writing to keep a stable network of people he truly cared for around him. It was the antidote in some ways to his string of unhappy love affairs, but moreover, it spoke to a need for something human he could count on while surrounded by the uncertainties of the world. As a picture of a man dealing with insecurities in a realistic way, it may never be equalled.

Holroyd's research is impeccable, his own writing flawless and perfectly constructed, his use of quotation judicious, and his tone veering from witty to heartbreaking at all the right moments.

Karen-Leigh says

I wish I could have read the 1967 version of this book in tandem with this New biography. Apparently the first biography was so negative about Ottoline that it skewed the interpretation of Lytton and undermined the truthfulness of his life.

Ron Van Der Reeder says

there is nothing new under the sun that has not occurred before, it started my fascination with all things Victorian (Bloomsbury, the Pre-raphaelites, Oscar Wilde, Thackeray, Dickens, William Morris, London)

Avril says

This is an absolutely astonishing biography. This volume is over 1000 pages long, and there is a second volume that deals with Strachey's writings, but the length didn't seem at all excessive and the interest was maintained right to the end.

The first version of this book was published in 1967, over fifty years ago, which makes it more admirable that Holroyd decided, as he said, to treat Lytton's homosexuality and his relationships as matter of fact as if he'd been heterosexual. Given that male homosexuality was only decriminalised in that same year, 1967, I think that was a brave decision.

Goodness, the Bloomsberries lived strange emotional lives! I am exhausted simply reading about Lytton's love life, especially when Carrington's is added to it.

Duncan M Simpson says

This must be one of the best biographies I have read. The book appeals because of the subject and my interest in Bloomsbury but Holroyd has written a book that reads as easily as a novel. A masterpiece.

Alan says

Read it following Saturday Review feature when the book first came out. My intro to Strachey and Bloomsbury.

Lauren Albert says

My, I couldn't wait for this book to end. It was like being stuck on a train with a bunch of amorous college students for weeks. Love triangles weren't enough--quadrangles and other angles multiplied. A loved B. B loved C. C loved A. Sometimes C loved A and B. And on and on. I totally lost touch with Strachey and his writing in the book.

Everyone else who reviewed the book seemed to love it. Alas.

Lisa says

This book by Holroyd (2 volumes) is more information about Strachey than any one person could ever use, but it's well-written and appealing. It was the basis for the film Carrington, I think. Modernists, modernists, modernists! It's like E Entertainment Television in book form, for modernist lovers.

Joy H. says

Added 1/15/12.

I did not read this book but I watched the film (via streaming from Netflix) adapted from the book, Lytton Strachey: The New Biography by Michael Holroyd.

The movie was: "Carrington" (1995) and starred Emma Thompson & Jonathan Pryce:

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0112637/>

"The story of the relationship between painter Dora Carrington and author Lytton Strachey in a World War One England of cottages and countryside. Although platonic due to Strachey's homosexuality, the relationship was nevertheless a deep and complicated one."

<http://movies.netflix.com/WiMovie/Car...>

"Pryce won the Best Actor Award at the 1995 Cannes Film Festival for his work in this absorbingly nuanced character study written and directed by esteemed playwright Christopher Hampton."

Emma Thompson was at her loveliest in this film.

About the strange love relationships in the movie, critic Roger Ebert said:

"Everyone in the Bloomsbury crowd (Virginia and Leonard Woolf, Roger Fry, John Maynard Keynes, E. M. Forster, Clive and Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant) were known for freedom, even recklessness, in their choices of romantic partners. A diagram of their love affairs would look like an underground system where every train stopped at every station."

FROM: <http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/p...>

The review by James Berardinelli was excellent:

Excerpts:

"The movie is historically accurate, but its focus is less on the events of the time than on the relationship between the principals."

"Carrington is divided into six chapters, most of which are named after the men who float in and out of the title character's life. Of course, Strachey is there all the time, a constant supportive and loving presence. In one segment, Dora loses her virginity to ardent suitor Mark Gertler (Rufus Sewell). In another, she marries Ralph

Partridge (Steven Waddington), primarily because Strachey is attracted to him. This leads to a bizarre triangle where only one relationship is consummated. Then there's an tryst with Partridge's best friend, Gerald Brenan (Samuel West), and a later affair which results in an unwanted pregnancy."

FROM: http://www.reelviews.net/php_review_t...

The choreography and scenery were beautiful.

Mary L. says

Most of you have probably seen the movie "Carrington" and I agree it was grand. However, that should not keep you from reading this biography of Lytton Strachey by Michael Holroyd from which the screen play was written. The book gives a much more elaborate portrait of Mr. Strachey and the Bloomsbury group. You will enjoy every nuance and be sorry when you come to the last page.

John D. Bennett says

This is a famous biography and of course worth reading but, unless you are a Bloomsbury obsessive, it is two or three times longer than it needs to be. Long stretches of my Kindle version had an odd flaw in which the word "the" was replaced by "die." I mean hundreds of times.

Cindy Brown Ash says

This was an extremely well-written, well-organized, enjoyable biography. It's very complete, and I can not imagine it ever being superseded. It was certainly not written in the style of a Strachey biography. The endnotes are entertaining and necessary to the text. This edition includes Holroyd's commentary on the process of preparing the biography and working with the people who knew Lytton Strachey. I envy him his access to these remarkable people, including Frances Partridge, James Strachey, and Duncan Grant. But I do wish that he had commented even briefly on the film, Carrington, that purports to have been based on Holroyd's biography. I recommend it for anyone with the patience to trawl through the intricacies of Bloomsbury and Lytton Strachey's eventful (Byzantine?) life.
