



Carlyle's House and Other Sketches

Virginia Woolf, David Bradshaw (Editor), Doris Lessing (Foreword)

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Carlyle's House and Other Sketches Virginia Woolf , David Bradshaw (Editor) , Doris Lessing (Foreword) *Carlyle's House and Other Sketches* marks the first publication of one of Virginia Woolf's very earliest notebooks. Recently unearthed from a collection of private papers, it contains a series of six striking and semi-autobiographical sketches, each transcribed and edited by Dr. David Bradshaw. From the cold formality of London townhouses with their rows of austere portraits, to the dull chaos of the academic's abode, and the eccentric spinster's Hampstead home, Virginia Woolf paints a series of portraits of everyday life, capturing character and setting in exquisite detail. Experimental in style, and heralding the later masterpieces *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*, this early notebook is quintessential Woolf.

Carlyle's House and Other Sketches Details

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From Reader Review Carlyle's House and Other Sketches for online ebook

Mimi Livaccari says

One feels like a voyeur reading these journal entries. Interesting to see what secret thoughts crossed Woolf's mind.

Sleepydrummer says

A young Virginia Stephen provides us a reliable record of the places she visits and the people she encounters amongst the London society of 1909. I really appreciated the footnotes and commentary on each of the sketches. They do not negate the rancorous characterizations written by Ms. Stephen, however they are germane to her life in that time.

I'm always interested in all her works, as well as her connections to other literary figures. "She lacks mystery; and the charm people have who withdraw, and don't care to coin their views." What a strike against Amber Reeves Blanco White the eponymous Ann Veronica (1909) — A wonderfully ferocious Woolf.

Paula Dembeck says

These are sketches from a notebook of Woolfe's recently found in a collection of private papers.

There are seven striking sketches offering her insight and thoughts on the society in which she moved.

The notebook is from very early in her writing life.

Matthew White says

In which Woolf takes the role of psychologist and judge. Within these sketches, our narrator analyses individuals through their nuances in activity and personality, drawing connections with their status, dwellings and possessions.

Academic context is gratefully provided in the form of introductions and commentaries, which do well to provide some warmth to the icy astuteness herein. A short, biting collection with a bitter edge.

Deborah Markus says

Do **not** read this slim book unless you're already familiar with Woolf -- her work, her life, and her family. This is a collection of several previously unpublished and unknown diary sketches Woolf wrote when she was 27. The introduction and accompanying notes are fascinating and valuable, but they **don't** serve as a good introduction to a notoriously difficult writer.

Also, don't expect much actual Woolf from this volume. Specifically, expect 16 pages out of about 70.

The reason it still gets four stars is that the supplementary material is brilliant and beautiful (Doris Lessing's introduction) or expert and adept (all those footnotes and other explanations).

If you're fascinated by Woolf's development as a writer and you've already read her fiction and essays and at least one biography, read this. I know that sounds snooty, but this is a pricy little book and you'll be bored out of your mind if you pick it up just for the heck of it.

Evan says

I was browsing the Strand in NYC last Saturday, looking for a quick read. I was delighted to come across this little book. It is one of an already extensive series from Hesperus Press of obscure works under 100 pages by not-so-obscure authors (Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Kafka's *Metamorphosis* make for dubious entries, but the rest listed on the inside cover fit the bill). I love the idea of this series! I plan to welcome family and friends to buy me other titles at random. They're all a perfect length for a domestic flight, and very attractive little pocketbooks. And this one cost me a buck fifty. No joke.

So this particular one consists simply of about 7 entries from Woolf's personal journal from 1909. When she was 27 years old, not yet published, not yet married. Two years into her first novel, with six yet to go. They are just little character sketches (five finger exercises as Doris Lessing calls them in the introduction). But they show ample evidence of the author's descriptive genius. It is also revealing of the author's prejudices (the introduction goes to some length trying to contextualize one particular anti-semitic entry). But if one approaches it as a glance at the author quite early in a career that would be spent coming to terms with the many prejudices of the British aristocracy in the early twentieth century (including anti-semitism), it's fascinating. Reading the whole book at one go (which is hard not to do) is like tasting seven wines.

Jukang Liwayway says

It was a small glimpse inside Woolf's mind. How she views the world - the people surrounding her. I would wanna have a cup of tea with her... or smoke weed and talk philosophical crap.

SarahC says

This is a short volume from the Hesperus Press collection that contains informal writings originally recorded in a notebook or journal by Virginia. They are a mixture of topics and observations with additional material provided by the editor David Bradshaw. Bradshaw's added notes and description are well done and are beneficial if you are interested in British artists, patrons, socialites, and intellectuals of the time (Thomas Carlyle, Amber Reeves, H.G. Wells, George Darwin, and Woolf's own close connections). Of particular note, it includes a controversial piece by Virginia expressing bigoted remarks toward Jewish people. This book short and very interesting and can lend something to those approaching the study of Woolf and her life.

tomasawyer says

Dans ce recueil, 7 textes inédits écrits en 1909 : La Maison de Carlyle, Miss Reeves, Cambridge, Hampstead, Un salon moderne, Les juifs, Le tribunal des divorces.

Virginia Woolf esquisse brièvement le portrait de différents quartiers et personnages londoniens de son époque, des intellos, des militants, des aristos, des bourgeois et autres notables. C'est pas le livre du siècle mais ça donne un aperçu de sa capacité à observer et comprendre les forces physiques et morales qui animent un être humain. Elle donne parfois l'impression d'être désenchantée, hautaine ou trop sévère dans ses appréciations mais elle est surtout cruellement juste, et elle ne cherche pas à dissimuler ce qu'elle comprend.

Melanie says

These are early "passionate apprentice"-stage pieces that never were published, or even transcribed from her early notebooks until a few years ago. They are rough sketches, very rough if compared to *The Common Reader*, or the mature perfection of *A Room of One's Own*. And yet, Woolf's sensibility is evident, as in an imagined moment between Thomas and Jane Carlyle: "Did one always feel a coldness between them? The only connection the flash of the intellect. I imagine so." Or, a character study of Miss Reeves, lover of H.G.Wells: "She seemed determined to be human also; to like people, even though they were stupid."

Any Modern Reader (however common) must recoil from the short essay, "Jews," a brief portrait of one Mrs. Loeb. "It seemed as though she wished to ingratiate herself with her guests and expected to be kicked by them...Her food, of course, swam in oil and was nasty." Her ostentatious kindness to poor relations is designed to acquire for them "the society of men and marriage. It seemed very elementary, very little disguised, and very unpleasant." Anti-semitism amongst the genteel of her time was common, indeed, but this Jewess wonders why a sketch of one woman was presented - albeit only in the notebook - as a description of "Jews."

Doris Lessing, in her introduction, writes, "We all wish our idols and exemplars were perfect; a pity she was such a wasp, such a snob - and all of the rest of it, but love has to be warts and all." Amen to that.

G. Lawrence says

A series of short sketches or impressions of places and people from the notebooks of Virginia Woolf. Shows through the author's gift for description, as well as her prickly, often waspish, character, and occasionally, her prejudices. Gave me a few things to think about.

Becca Jones says

It's really good to remember that even amazing authors had to start somewhere. The analyses, which is most of the book, is concise and interesting. Not where you would want to jump in to her work but worthwhile.

Amanda says

These are actually just very brief sketches taken out of a short diary that she wrote so they aren't her best work and one is an offensive portrait titled "The Jew" so they aren't the best reflection of Woolf herself either. But they were good insights into what her life was like for a brief moment and were good inspiration to do a better job at writing in my diary..

Martin Raybould says

Short and fairly nasty pieces that show the spiteful side of Woolf's character.

Mark says

The Hesperus Press produce lovely books of less than 100 pages which are editions of works by varying different writers from vastly different times. I have four or five of these lovely small editions on my shelves and they are really lovely volumes.

This one, however, is particularly strange in that it is a triptych to Virginia Woolfness consisting of two side panels of essay and commentary gathered around seven short diary entries or sketches written by the 27 year old Virginia Stephens between February 23rd and November 3rd 1909. The entries are so short that they make up way less than a third of the whole.

The first panel is a lovely essay by Doris Lessing (followed by an introduction from David Bradshaw) in which she reflects upon this immature and partly formed writer as she muses on paper on various subjects. Here we see both Virginia Stephens the snob, the bigot, the sneerer but also catch glimpses of the future Virginia Woolf, the fascinated, the poet, the searcher after truth. The essay looks coldly at the content of these sketches whilst also looking ahead and reflecting on the influence this mature woman would have on the development of literature as a whole and on the place of women in culture in particular.

Then come the sketches themselves. Short and disconnected, descriptive of place, people and culture. There are flashes of beauty and insight and there are moments of awkwardness and discomfort but overall they probably, in themselves add little to all things Woolf unless it be to see those seeds of future growth.

The third part of the triptych is the commentary confidently written by David Bradshaw in which he analyses, dissects and displays the inner thinking or at least his theories on the thought processes that went into these essays. It is fascinating, revealing but, overall, I found it rather uncomfortable.

By that i mean both Lessing and Bradshaw speak of how in her writing she was *"trying to make (them)nets to catch what she saw as a subtler truth about life"* and that *"her writing life was a progression of daring experiments"* and it is this which makes me wonder at our delving too deeply into what was never written for

publication whether public or indeed private.

These were not the offerings or prepared statements of a formed and conscious writer, moulded and chipped and pared down into acceptable shape but rather they were the private struggles and practising of a snobby blue stocking who was seeking out her voice and place in the literary firmament whilst wading her way through the prejudice, expectations and outlook of her class and upbringing.

Much is made both by Bradshaw and Lessing of her bigoted dismissive and even offensive portrayal of the 'coarsely skinned jewess', Mrs Loeb or of her patronizing smirking at her fairly evidently bonkers if generous patron Lady Ottoline Morrell but would everything I ever thought stand up to close whiter than white scrutiny if, like Woolf, I committed those thoughts to paper. Do not get me wrong, I love Woolf and therefore devour all things 'woolferine' with great gusto but if these sketches are your first experience of Woolf she might be dismissed out of hand and painted into the corner of the house called 'nasty cow'. This would seem tragic if then none of her other works were tasted or more sadder still if her talent was always feted as 'in spite of' her character.

I realize that a writer does not need to be nice or pleasant or amenable in order to be loved and read and enjoyed but this very short taste of Woolf gives only the briefest of sightings. Lessing and Bradshaw are at pains to point this out of course but that does not necessarily prevent the rot setting in for some.

This is a fascinating read because the development of future thoughts and ideas and directions can possibly be seen but it is nowhere near the whole story. Her anti-semitism may well be in evidence here but by the 1930's she was a woman with a different outlook, she may well appear out of touch or rather cold here but that is not the story that necessarily is encountered as we move through her life.

These sketches were the private jottings, I am pleased to have encountered them but am not sure if they do not do her a disservice if this is the understanding people draw of Woolf the private thinker when in fact it could as easily have been Woolf the woman in a bit of a strop, Woolf the woman who this day happened to be feeling particularly bitchy or cantankerous or superior.

This triptych is a thing of fascination to gaze upon but it only gives a part of the story, to get a fuller sense of the image the triptych needs to be set in its place, in the whole building.
