

Cary Grant: The Lonely Heart

Charles Higham , Roy Moseley

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Extensively documented and filled with illuminating comments from Grant's fellow actors, friends, and associates, *The Lonely Heart* is a fascinating and controversial portrait of an elegant, tormented man, Cary Grant.

Cary Grant: The Lonely Heart Details

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From Reader Review Cary Grant: The Lonely Heart for online ebook

Alamgir Khan says

A highly readable account of the life of Archie Leach, better known to the world as Cary Grant. Cary Grant was a great star of old Hollywood, who made many classic films, including *The Philadelphia Story*, *North by Northwest* and *Charade*. These films and the Grant persona continue to have great appeal even to the present day. The main thesis of the book seems to be that even Archie was in such awe of his screen persona that he struggled most of his life to live up to Cary Grant. Such an interesting and eventful life inevitably makes for an interesting read.

Belinda says

This is a pretty lurid biography. Some claims this book makes are 1) Cary Grant was bisexual 2) Cary Grant was Jewish 3) His official mother wasn't actually his mother - it was a woman called Lillian who his father had an affair with (no evidence provided) 4) He was involved in a long-term gay relationship with Howard Hughes.

Not having access to the primary information these authors used to make these claims I won't dismiss them out of hand, but I would advise anyone who reads this book to take any "facts" presented with a grain of salt...

XX Sarah XX (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says

Une lecture intéressante.

Kathryn says

I can't say I'm exactly happy I read this book. I prefer to enjoy movies like *Bringing up Baby* or *North by Northwest* or *To Catch a Thief* without thinking about the actors behind the characters on screen. (My MIL gave the book to me, so...)

Cary Grant, born Archie Leach, had a troubled life. This biography leads us through his parental neglect, the likelihood that he was illegitimate (and the possibly-connected lack of affection from his mother), his time with a traveling circus as a young boy, and his eventual emigration from Britain to America to eventually become a movie star. It follows his adult life all the way to the grave.

The overall impression I got from the book is that Cary Grant was a very sad, very lonely person who spent his life searching for the love and affection he never received from his parents. Unable to give love himself, he never managed to accept it from others.

The biography itself is well-written enough; this is another case where my two stars reflect my experience with the book rather than its actual quality. I just don't like depressing stories with no happy endings.

Dave Thorner says

Very dry account of Cary Grant's life. I expected it to be a little more entertaining. The excerpts dealing with his espionage work was new ground for me, so in turn it peaked my interest. I thought that the biography would delve more into his higher-grossing or critically-acclaimed films with more fervor but it seemed to deal much more with his personal life. I hope there is a more captivating biography of Cary Grant out there.

Michael Holbrook says

Loaded with great info, but poorly written: scattered, flighty. Like someone put a huge paper calendar on the wall from Grant's birth to death, filled in the boxes on those dates when something happened, then just sat at the keyboard and made a linear story, every now and again finding an appropriate quote. There are instances in this book where I'll be reading along and it'd be like someone inserted a random paragraph, then would go back to the story line. Very odd.

Liz Alexander says

Having already read three other books about the enigmatic Cary Grant (Marc Eliot's *Cary Grant: A Biography*; Graham McCann's *A Class Apart* and *Dear Cary: My Life with Cary Grant* by Dyan Cannon) I admit I jumped around a lot with this book. I'd look in the Index, find a topic or a person I was interested in reading about connected with Grant's life and read forward or backward from there. My reading pleasure was probably little different than if I'd begun at page 1 and ended at page 340.

As with other reviewers, I wasn't hugely impressed by this book, although I'll leave its exposition to others, since the incredible story of Cary Grant must be pretty well known by now. (And if you don't know it, why would you want to spoil the fun by hearing about all the "secrets" in advance?)

What I will remark upon is the authors' writing style. Since the content was already well-trodden ground, I amused myself by notating some of Higham and Moseley's most egregious editorializing:

After referencing a quarrel between Grant and his first wife, Virginia Cherrill, these biographers write: "(M)ore than one columnist hinted that the argument was over (Randolph) Scott. But it was probably just a trivial difference of opinion." On what evidence do they conclude that?

In talking about Randolph Scott's short-lived marriage to the horse racing mad Marion duPont (Scott and Grant having long been suspected of being lovers, since both men were allegedly bi-sexual), Hingham and Moseley write: "Randolph Scott, who looked rather like a horse, was the next on her list." I must say, in all the movies in which I've seen Scott, I've never thought him to have equine looks! And even if he did, this seems a ridiculous thing to write.

The authors make so many statements that don't appear to have come from any particular source (or,

certainly, they don't name them) yet feel they can make "fly on the wall" comments like: "She (Virginia Cherrill, now divorced from Grant) appeared at social event after social event, escorted by a number of eligible bachelors. But she was devoted and faithful to her husband...." Says who?

And yet they also ask questions for which no answers are supplied. When talking about Grant's association with Countess Dorothy di Frasso during the Second World War, when Grant allegedly was working for British Intelligence, they ask (but don't elucidate further: "Was he only pretending to support the Countess, while in fact really investigating her and her activities?"

Then there are bizarre sentences like, "Utterly professional always, Cary fought his way through the work, only occasionally breaking into an uncontrollable rage when he could take the strain no longer." Huh? Do the authors not see the irony of using "utterly professional" and "uncontrollable rage" in the same sentence? Nor am I sure we can take this "utterly professional" claim with anything but a pinch of salt when in previous and future pages, Grant is reported to have sulked during the filming of *The Bishop's Wife*, and on the first day of shooting *An Affair to Remember* apparently refused to work until the buttons on the officers' uniforms "were corrected." And these are just two incidents -- of many.

I borrowed this book from the library. It seems dated. Not just because it was published in 1989 but because it seems more reminiscent of the kind of writing put out by Louella Parsons and Hedda Hopper fifty years earlier!

Laura says

The book had a lot of surprises for me. I knew he was born in England, but I did not know about the crazy mixed-up family he had. His father was a womanizer. His birth mom, whom he never met, apparently put him up for adoption. His adoptive mom rejected him and was forever mourning the early death of a perfect baby boy that she had had before Cary came along. So Cary bore a lot of barely repressed rage a women which he never fully resolved in spite of psychiatric counseling and other techniques.

Cary spent years as a stilt-walker with a family act that also toured in Europe. He did this for so long and from such early youth that when he first took to the stage he had to re-learn how to walk properly -- he was very bow-legged.

Lots more.

Marilyn Mansfield says

Having read the biography written by his daughter who obviously adored her father I wanted to read a less biased biography. This definitely gives a rounder picture and the author tries to give coverage to both the actors flaws and virtues. Unfortunately, the book reads like a private detectives report. It is very dry and I was tempted several times to abandon it but I slogged on. There were definitely things I didn't know and wish I was still ignorant of--his bisexuality came as no surprise but his cruelty and violence were unexpected.

Jennifer Robb says

Lots of facts, but the narrative was very dry and distant-feeling so it took a long time for me to read all the way through. It seems that Grant's personal life was very different than his on screen personas which is always a bit disappointing to discover.

Todd says

I haven't finished this and probably never will... it is just so badly written. It was apparently a NY Times bestseller! It is nonstop facts and no flavor. However, the story of Grant's life is quite interesting-- secret-gay-movie-star-heartthrob, married several times for show, involved with British intelligence and the CIA as an anti-fascist Hollywood spy, friends with Bugsy Siegel and Howard Hughes, early LSD-psychiatry patient... that's as far as I got. I highly recommend a better biography. The way they treat his bisexuality is funny, for a minute, while they introduce the touchy subject. That is the high point of the writing.

Surreysmum says

[These notes were made in 1992:]. Read in the 1989 Harcourt Brace Jovanovich edition. I don't know who was the lead on this project - both Charles Higham and Roy Moseley, his co-author, recount incidents of personal interaction with Grant, and both have written about other Hollywood personalities of this period. Certainly, there was quite a bit to write about: in all sorts of ways Grant was not what he seemed. There is some question as to whether Elsie Leach (whom he falsely believed to be dead for many years - she was in an asylum) was his real mother. Connected with that mystery was Grant's pattern of claiming Jewishness. Then there was the quite unmysterious but of course in his day unrevealable matter of his bisexuality. Notwithstanding his five marriages & numerous other consummated relationships with women, Grant also sustained relationships with designer Jack Kelly, actor Randolph Scott and, briefly, Howard Hughes, as well as a number of briefer encounters, one of which got him arrested. The powers-that-be bailed him out on that one (it was during the WWII period) mainly because he was acting as a British agent in Hollywood, gathering information on Nazis & Nazi sympathizers like Errol Flynn. This book does not even pretend to be an examination of Grant's films, or of his strengths, weaknesses & techniques as an actor. There is no filmography, and although I believe the films are all mentioned as they came up chronologically, the authors have focussed on his relationships (working & otherwise) with costars & directors, his behaviour on the set (always interfering with set design) & the general box-office appeal of the movie. The one comment they do quite consistently make about the movie is when Grant appears in drag or inserts some "gay" innuendo into the dialogue or action. Not without an agenda, our authors, but they certainly mustered lots of evidence. Although it's not a total hack job, Grant emerges from these pages as a very troubled human being who caused a lot of grief for those around him.

GoldGato says

A life lived in deception.

At least that's what the authors (Charles Higham and Roy Moseley) would have us believe, regarding Cary

Grant. Born Archibald Alexander Leach in Bristol, England, just four years into the twentieth century, the abandoned child would adapt to life by taking bits and pieces of other people's lives and forge a new identity as the classiest screen actor of all time.

"You never know where he has come from or where he is going, as if he had no home, like a fish in the oceanic night."

(Clifford Odets on Mr. Grant)

As a child, Grant longed to board the many sailing vessels that docked at Bristol in hopes of seeing the world and having a great adventure. The authors write that contrary to previous biographies which stated that Grant left for America in his teens, little Archie was already a member of an acrobatic troupe and left for America before the age of ten. Either way, he simply did not grow up with a ready-made life ahead and carved it all out along the way. Rather audacious and admirable. Grant was very much a self-made man.

The focus of this bio is on Grant's relationships with the 'shockers' being his homosexuality and his wartime undercover spying for the Allies. The conversations supporting these 'facts' are backed up in the Notes section. Alas, author Higham also wrote a book about Errol Flynn stating HE was also homosexual and an Axis spy (which he repeats throughout this book). Higham also stated Howard Hughes and Tyrone Power were gay, too.

The stories weren't really juicy, and I felt there was always a personal agenda at play throughout the book. Having worked in the film industry, I know that one can leave the lot to walk across the street and upon returning five minutes later can find wild fabricated stories that have nothing to do with reality. Was Cary Grant really a spy for the Yanks and Brits? The Errol Flynn info was shot down by later biographies who found that Higham had altered his 'sources' to justify what he wanted to believe. Is that what he did here, too?

Who knows. Grant was very private, disliked going out, was stingy with his hard-earned money, and didn't throw parties for his peers. This resulted in gossip, as others envied his independence. The actor was so obsessed with detail that I'm surprised the author didn't also claim Grant had OCD, but then that wasn't a big deal in the 1980s when this was written. Some 'accounts' are pretty far out...such as Grant being in the back cottage of the main house where the Manson murders were being committed (supposedly entertaining a young man). Get realsies.

Anyway, it's a true summer read. Some of it might be true, some of it might not, but it's a mass market paperback so if it falls into the pool by accident, life will go on. Time for a little *North By Northwest*.

Book Season = Summer (seasons in the sun)

tina michelle says

i like almost all biographies, it could be about the schoe down the street and i'd still be fascinated by their childhoods, baggage, triumphs and tribulations.

Karen says

This book is the compelling story of film star Cary Grant, a fascinating tale of the life of a movie star in the golden age of stars.
