



Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer

By Richard Holmes

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Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer By Richard Holmes

Richard Holmes knew he had become a true biographer the day his bank bounced a check that he had inadvertently dated 1772. Because for the acclaimed chronicler of Shelley and Coleridge, biography is a physical pursuit, an ardent and arduous retracing of footsteps that may have vanished centuries before.

In this gripping book, Holmes takes us from France's Massif Central, where he followed the route taken by Robert Louis Stevenson and a sweet-natured donkey, to Mary Wollstonecraft's Revolutionary Paris, to the Italian villages where Percy Shelley tried to cast off the strictures of English morality and marriage. *Footsteps* is a wonderful exploration of the ties between biographers and their subjects, filled with passion and revelations.

“Deeply impressive . . . *Footsteps* is a singular event in the modern history of biography, and in itself a delightful reading experience.”—Alfred Kazin

“This exhilarating book, part biography, part autobiography, shows the biographer as sleuth and huntsman, tracking his subjects through space and time.”—*The Observer*

“A modern masterpiece . . . [Holmes is] the most romantic of contemporary biographers and probably the most revolutionary in spirit and form.”—Michael Holroyd, author of *Bernard Shaw*



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Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer By Richard Holmes Bibliography

- Rank: #272082 in Books
- Published on: 1996-04-30
- Released on: 1996-04-30
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.90" h x .60" w x 5.20" l, .84 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 296 pages



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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Follow the footsteps of this absorbing and delightful author as he attempts to trace the paths of four sometimes intractable, but always fascinating, Romantic writers. Robert Louis Stevenson's travels through the Cevennes with a donkey; Mary Wollstonecraft's revolutionary Paris and friends; Percy B. Shelley's Italian exile (a postscript to Holmes's acclaimed Shelley biography); and Gerard de Nerval's deranged vision and sad pilgrimage are all presented with rigor, charm, and historical and personal sleuthwork. Holmes's interest in each biographical subject is palpable and seems at times a fixation. But he rewards the reader with a growing understanding of each writer's life, as well as much insight into the technique and art of biography. Enjoyable, informative reading for literati, this book is recommended for larger general and academic collections. Carol J. Lichtenberg, Washington State Univ. Lib., Pullman

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Review

'This exhilarating book, part biography, part autobiography, shows the biographer as sleuth and huntsman, tracking his subjects through space and time.' Hilary Spurling, *Observer* 'Nothing is simple in this intricate, complicated and fascinating book, which is like a set of Russian dolls, biography containing travel-writing containing autobiography containing and so on...Holmes is indeed a biographer and a romantic in every sense.' Richard Boston, *Guardian*

From the Back Cover

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