MASTER THESIS

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„Edwardian Identity and the Victorian Other: Lytton Strachey's invention of the Eminent Victorians"

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Abstract

This thesis examines the significance of Lytton Strachey's 1918 book, '*Eminent Victorians*,' in reflecting the development of modern British identity. The thesis argues that Strachey's book constructed a distinct 'Victorian Other' against which the identity of later generations could be mirrored. The thesis begins by providing a biography of Strachey from birth to the publication of *'Eminent Victorians*.' It explores his intellectual growth and considers the importance of his position as a prominent member of the 'Bloomsbury Group. Next, the thesis delves into Strachey's construction of the Victorian Age. Strachey characterises the period by religious and moral intensity while emphasising the significance of masculinity. The thesis then delves into Strachey's assessment of this period, focusing on his critique of the British State. Furthermore, the thesis analyses Strachey's utilisation of the 'Camp' style, employed to puncture masculine standards of behaviour and explore the inner lives of famous Victorians. Continuing, the thesis highlights the book's success during the late- and post-war climate in Britain. It argues that the work benefited from both the author's social prominence and its alignment with broader cultural trends that had emerged during wartime. In conclusion, the thesis positions '*Eminent Victorians*' as a key work in the evolution of conceptions of British identity, challenging the assumptions held by previous generations and proposing a more introspective identity in response.

Abstrakt

In dieser Masterthesis wird die Bedeutung von Lytton Stracheys 1918 erschienenem Buch "Eminent Victorians" für die Entwicklung der modernen britischen Identität untersucht. In der Masterthesis wird argumentiert, dass Strachey in seinem Buch ein eindeutiges "viktorianisches Anderes" konstruierte, an dem sich die Identität späterer Generationen spiegeln konnte. Die Masterthesis beginnt mit einer Biographie Stracheys von der Geburt bis zur Veröffentlichung von "Eminent Victorians". Sie untersucht seine intellektuelle Entwicklung und untersucht die Bedeutung seiner Position als prominentes Mitglied der Bloomsbury Group". Anschließend befasst sich die Masterthesis mit Stracheys Konstruktion des viktorianischen Zeitalters. Strachey charakterisiert diese Zeit durch religiöse und moralische Intensität und betont die Bedeutung der Männlichkeit. Die Masterthesis befasst sich dann mit Stracheys Einschätzung dieser Zeit, wobei der Schwerpunkt auf seiner Kritik am britischen Staat liegt. Darüber hinaus analysiert die Masterthesis Stracheys Verwendung des "Camp"-Stils, mit dem er die männlichen Verhaltensnormen durchbricht und das Innenleben berühmter viktorianischer Persönlichkeiten erforscht. In der Masterthesis wird auch der Erfolg des Buches in der britischen Nachkriegszeit beleuchtet. Es wird argumentiert, dass das Werk sowohl von der sozialen Prominenz des Autors als auch von seiner Ausrichtung auf breitere kulturelle Trends profitierte, die während des Krieges entstanden waren. Abschließend positioniert die Masterthesis "Eminent Victorians" als ein Schlüsselwerk in der Entwicklung der britischen Identitätsvorstellungen, das die Annahmen früherer Generationen in Frage stellt und als Antwort darauf eine stärker introspektive Identität vorschlägt.

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction and Thesis Statement

The sun shone all day in Berkshire on the 9th of May, 1918. In the village of Tidmarsh, in a cottage by the spluttering waters of the River Pang, a writer could breathe a sigh of relaxation. Lytton Strachey had been working on '*Eminent Victorians*' for six years. Now his book was published. In a slim volume of about 100 pages, Strachey retold the lives of four famous figures from the previous century, presenting them as flawed, difficult people rather than following his predecessors and characterising them as heroes. The book marked the arrival of Strachey as a major English writer. Though respected in his literary circle, after May 1918 Lytton found himself invited to dinner with Prime Ministers and celebrated across the country: by the end of June, he was having to tell his friends that 'I remain calm even in the face of the praises of the Daily Telegraph and Mr. Asquith.'[1] This praise would last for the remainder of Lytton's life and well beyond it. In the eyes of his audience, his book was a masterpiece. Writing shortly after Strachey's death in 1932, Leonard Woolf wrote that 'the great effect and importance of '*Eminent Victorians*' during the last fourteen years are shown both by the admiration and the hostility which they have roused.'[2] Edmund Wilson, a New York-based critic, wrote that 'neither the Americans nor the English have ever, since Eminent Victorians appeared, been able to feel quite the same about the legends that had dominated their pasts.'[3] Nearly a century later, politicians in the United Kingdom continue to celebrate '*Eminent Victorians'* as a 'work of importance.'[4] For decades, people have enjoyed and acclaimed Strachey's little book, yet its potential as a keyhole to reveal cultural change in early Twentieth-Century Britain and beyond remains largely untapped.

This Thesis analyses '*Eminent Victorians*' and considers its significance in the evolution of conceptions of modern British identity. In contrast to existing accounts of

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[1] Quoted in Michael Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: The New Biography*', (London, 1994), 513

[2] Leonard Woolf, quoted in S.P. Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*' (Toronto, 1995), 255

[3] Edmund Wilson, 'Lytton Strachey: Obituary', *New Republic*, September 21, 1932

[4] Roy Hattersley, *'The Edwardians'*, (London, 2005), 304

Strachey's work, which focus upon the stylistic innovation of the book and critique its omissions and misrepresentations, the thesis focuses upon the importance of *'Eminent Victorians*' as a work which helped to reflect changing British identity in the early Twentieth Century. Strachey's work drew a line between the Edwardians and their Victorian predecessors, which Lytton achieved by constructing a fictional Victorian 'other'. His critiques of the ineptitude and hypocrisy of the Victorians and his innovative use of 'camp' writing to undermine contemporary standards of masculinity combined to create a book that offered readers a new way to view themselves and understand their relationship with the past. Strachey's work managed to symbolise the shift between two generations in the United Kingdom. As such, it offers useful lessons for the consideration of how and why identities evolve.

1.2. Thesis Structure

The Thesis has seven sections. Firstly, the introduction establishes the subject, objective and structure of the Thesis, outlining key theoretical and historical influences and contributions. The thesis then provides Strachey's biography, examining the social and cultural background that resulted in the production of '*Eminent Victorians*'. The next three sections explore the book itself. 'The Victorian Other' considers Strachey's presentation of the Victorian Age, inspecting the qualities he designates as 'Victorian' and placing them into context in early Twentieth-Century Britain. The next chapter, 'Exposing the Victorians', looks at Strachey's multifaceted assessment of his Victorian Other. The sixth section, 'The Success of Eminent Victorians', explores how Strachey's book was received by British society in 1918, noting both the receptivity of audiences to the work and considering the factors which helped create this success. After offering conclusions, the thesis then analyses the scholarship that surrounds '*Eminent Victorians*' and this period of British History.

1.3. Theoretical Background and Engagement

The core theoretical question which the thesis engages with is the question of how identities evolve, and how this evolution is reflected in cultural works like '*Eminent Victorians*'. Two aspects of this question are particularly placed into focus:

the question of defining oneself against a previous generation, and the role of heroes as cultural figures around which identities are built. Despite the significance of identity to political science and history, studies of identity generation typically focus on construction of identity against foreign 'others'. For instance, Graeber & Wingrow focus on the importance of different 'peoples' who 'came to define themselves increasingly against each other' in ancient history, while in political science, Rumelili notes the importance of 'the construction of European and Turkish identities vis-à-vis each other' in Turkish and European politics.[5] In contrast to works which study how identities are constructed from perceived differences between separate societies, much less work has been done on the importance of previous generations as an 'other' to contrast oneself with. Given the focus of '*Eminent Victorians*' on famous individuals, the cultural and political significance of heroes is another key concern of the thesis. The importance of heroes has been debated within multiple social science disciplines. In historiography, Jones has noted that famous individuals can be used to 'find evidence of… cultural beliefs, social practices, political structures and economic systems.'[6] In political science, Kitchen notes that heroic figures can serve a variety of key functions, from serving as an 'anchor' of political identity to legitimating political goals.[7] In International Relations, Mikanagi notes that the presence of idealised codes of action sharply affect the ways in which foreign policy actors behave and react to international change.[8] In proposing a new attitude towards the heroes of his father's generation, Lytton Strachey's book reflects shifts in British identities during the first two decades of the Twentieth Century and can be used to understand these shifts.

The thesis draws upon theoretical insights from different backgrounds. The work of two historians is crucial to the thesis' approach. The first is Quentin Skinner. Skinner proposes that texts are best understood as responses to contemporary socio-

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[5] David Graeber & David Wengrow, '*The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*' (London, 2021), 207; Bahar Rumelili, 'Turkey: Identity, Foreign Policy, and Socialisation in a Post-Enlargement Europe', *European Integration*, Vol. XXXIII (2011), 235

[6] Max Jones, 'What Should Historians Do With Heroes? Reflections on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain', *History Compass*. Vol. V (2007), 440

[7] Veronica Kitchen, 'Heroism and the Construction of Political Community', in Veronica Kitchen & Jennifer Mathers (eds.), 'Heroism and Global Politics' (London, 2018), 31, 22

[8] Yumiko Mikanagi, '*Masculinity and Japan's Foreign Relations*' (London, 2011), 1

political debates, rather than as components of 'canons.'[9] Following Skinner, the significance of Strachey lies not in his relation to similar writers working at different times, but rather in his contribution to the specific cultural climate of Britain in 1918. Secondly, the essay acknowledges the importance of Benedict Anderson's theory of 'imagined communities'. Anderson provides a brilliant model of the 'nation' as a socially-constructed community 'imagined' by those who consider themselves members.[10] The thesis uses Anderson's conception of the imagined community, considering how the boundaries and features of Britain's political and cultural community changed over time and how Strachey's work featured in this evolution. Alongside these historiographical influences, the Thesis engages with political scientists and thinkers studying the relationship between gender, sexuality and politics. A key part of '*Eminent Victorians*' is Strachey's use of 'camp', understood by Sontag as 'a certain mode of aestheticism… seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon.'[11] Recognising masculinity as political, as a 'constitutive element of social relationships', lends importance to '*Eminent Victorians*' as a book which offered new ways to consider masculinity and male role models.[12] The thesis also builds upon scholarship which considers the importance of 'camp' writing, such as Bergman's argument that the style can be seen as a 'a strategic move in a much larger battle' against dominant cultural and political trends.[13]

Building off these foundations, the thesis makes two primary scholarly contributions. Firstly, it goes further than previous studies in emphasising the role of Strachey's book as a reflection of changing identity in twentieth-century Britain. Though other scholars have hinted at the wider cultural significance of '*Victorians*', as in Janes' argument that the book impacted contemporaries such as J.M. Keynes, this piece goes further and argues that Strachey's emphasis upon the between

[9] Quentin Skinner, '*Visions of Politics: Regarding Method*' (Cambridge, UK., 2002), 57-89

[10] Benedict Anderson, '*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*' (London, 1991), 6-7

[11] Susan Sontag, 'Notes on Camp', accessed via https://monstrousculture.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/sontag_camp.pdf

[12] Joan Scott, quoted in Eva Kreisky, 'Masculinity as an Analytical Category: Work in Progress', in Kathleen Starck (ed.), '*A Man's World? Political Masculinities in Literature and Culture*' (Newcastle, 2014), 15

[13] David Bergman, 'Strategic Camp: The Art of Gay Rhetoric', in David Bergman (ed.), '*Camp Grounds: Style and Homosexuality*' (Amherst, 1993), 94

'Victorian' notions of British identity and modern ones formed over the course of the First World War was crucial to the book's success and impact.[14] '*Victorians*' reflected a major shift in conceptions of British identity in this period, and so appealed to and impacted a wider group of people than Strachey's immediate circle. The second contribution made by the thesis is to highlight the importance of constructed images of other generations as an 'other' by which identity can be formed. Much attention on identity formation focusses upon the distinction between a domestic self and a foreign other, while in '*Eminent Victorians*' Lytton Strachey does not look abroad, but to the immediate past in his shaping of identity in late Edwardian and wartime Britain.

1.4. Historical Background

The thesis focusses on late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, treating the years 1880-1918 as a roughly continuous period, unbroken by what Tsatsanis refers to as a 'fundamental experience': a crisis or other event so important as to separate those who experienced their formative years before or after it.[15] The early 1880s coincide both with Lytton Strachey's birth and a break in Victorian History: the late 1870s and the early 1880s saw the 'Long Depression' hit the United Kingdom, prompting major economic reform and social turmoil as sectors like agriculture nearly collapsed in the face of foreign pressure.[16] Though the First World War does mark a key turning point in British History, the outbreak of war in itself did not immediately and radically shape British society. As Vernon notes, it was the *'culmination* of the Great War… [that] brought down the final curtain on the Victorian age'.[17] The issues of late Victorian Britain, from the question of Ireland's place in the United Kingdom to the demands of the Suffragette movement and the defence of British global power,

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[14] Dominic Janes, 'Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness and John Maynard Keynes' The Economic Consequences of the Peace (1919)', *Literature and History*, Vol. XXIII (2014)

[15] Emmanouil Tsatsanis, Marco Lisi & Andre Freire, 'The Lost Generation and Its Political Discontents: Age-related Divides in Southern Europe after the Crisis', *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. XXVI (2021), 134

[16] A.E. Musson, 'The Great Depression in Britain, 1873–1896: A Reappraisal', *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XIX (1959), 199

[17] James Vernon, 'Historians and the Victorian Studies Question: Response', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. XVI (2005), 273

were answered by the First World War. The end of War marks a key turn in British history: as such, the years of war should be integrated with the preceding decades.

Late Nineteenth- and early Twentieth-Century Britain offers a distinctive historical case study. The United Kingdom at the turn of the last century was enjoying the warm autumn of its century as the world's preeminent economic, political and cultural superpower. Despite being eclipsed by American and German production, Britain was a leading world economy, with London the planet's largest city. British industrial goods were commonplace everywhere and the UK represented over two-thirds of the global coal trade, coal then representing 'the single most important internationally traded form of energy.'[18] British political culture seemed to play in a different key to rivals like France and Germany, with Edgerton noting that the combination of multiple nations within the United Kingdom, the rule of a huge empire and a political tradition focussed upon international issues such as free trade resulted in a comparatively cosmopolitan, liberal, free-trading' culture within which 'nationalism is practically invisible.'[19] This period saw a British 'fin de siècle,' characterised by anxiety about Britain's declining vitality as a domestic society and as an international power, cultural pessimism and chauvinistic patriotism.[20]

When the thesis uses phrases like 'changing British identity', it does not attempt to describe the entire population of Great Britain. Britain contains multiple distinct political communities. The focus of this thesis lies on the specific 'political community' within which Strachey operated. Strachey lay at the top of Britain's social hierarchy, with the writer socialising with the country's ancient families and political leaders. His community was the rich and famous of the United Kingdom. This group was small, and multiple studies have shown that their attitudes vary substantially with other groups across the country. For instance, Smith has shown that the industrial working class could demonstrate a much higher degree of tolerance towards homosexuality than the country's elite in this period.[21] However, though small,

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[18] David Edgerton, '*The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: a Twentieth Century History*' (London, 2018), 102

[19] Ibid., 35-6

[20] Nicholas Shrimpton, 'Lane, You're a Perfect Pessimist: Pessimism and the English 'Fin de Siecle'', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. XXXVII (2007), 42

[21] Helen Smith, '*Masculinity, Class and Same-Sex Desire in Industrial England, 1895-1957*' (Basingstoke, 2015)

conceited and snobbish, Strachey's elite community is still very much worthy of study. They rested their hands on levers of immense power, playing a key role both in the evolution of the United Kingdom and through it, the rest of the world. Edwardian elites could and did change the world, and Strachey's '*Eminent Victorians*' reflected the changing way they went about it.

A crucial concept in the thesis is the idea of a Victorian masculinity which Strachey engaged with and sought to puncture. The recognition of particularly male attributes and codes of behaviour was a significant part of life in the Victorian period: Barrett notes that even colonial rebellions could be remembered primarily for the 'ideal definition of masculine vigour and strength' offered by their leaders.[22] Masculinity was a multifaceted concept in the period, with Adams arguing that different commentators and thinkers offered 'markedly varied rhetorics' defining masculinity and masculine ideals, from the literary heroes described by Carlyle to the religious codes of male behaviour prescribed by the different churches of the United Kingdom.[23] Despite this variety, Adams also notes that 'a small number of models of masculine identity' appear throughout the Victorian period.[24] This thesis also observes a commonality between different expressions of Victorian masculinity, offering an understanding based on three key attributes: dedication to service, stoicism and superiority. Firstly, across different walks of life, men in the Victorian Age were expected to devote themselves to higher purposes, ranging from the specifically military service observed by Anderson in her model of 'christian militarism', or the looser expectation that working class men would help others outlined in Price's study of 'everyday heroism' in Victorian Britain.[25] Secondly, Victorian ideas of masculinity commonly expected men to overcome their emotions: as Lewis notes, it was a period in 'which feelings were deliberately repressed or brushed aside', or at least one in

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[22] Matthew Barrett, 'Hero of the Half-Breed Rebellion: Gabriel Dumont and Late Victorian Military Masculinity', *Journal of Canadian Studies*, Vol. XLVIII (2014), 80

[23] James Eli Adams, '*Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*' (Cornall, 1995), 2

[24] Ibid.

[25] Olive Anderson, 'The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXXVI (1971); John Price, '*Everyday Heroism: Victorian constructions of the heroic civilian*' (London, 2014)

which emotional repression was seen as a sign of strength.[26] Finally, Victorian masculinity typically implied a sense of superiority to other social groups. This included both improper men, whether improper because of sexual preference, physical weakness or racial difference, and women: Griffin argues that Victorian domestic ideology typically sought the 'total subordination of women to their husbands'.[27] This combination of service, stoicism and superiority underlay much Victorian thinking about masculinity. The gradual unwrapping of this code of behaviour in the early Twentieth Century is crucial to understanding '*Eminent Victorians*' and British culture in and around 1918.

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[26] Joanna Lewis, '*Empire of Sentiment: The Death of Livingstone and the Myth of Victorian Imperialism*' (Cambridge, UK., 2018), 1

[27] Ben Griffin, '*The Politics of Gender in Victorian Britain: Masculinity, Political Culture and the Struggle for Women's Rights*' (Cambridge, UK., 2012), 45

2. The Road to Eminent Victorians

This chapter follows Lytton Strachey's life up to the publication of '*Eminent Victorians*'. It considers the importance of his intellectual development and examines the significance of his time as an influential member of the exclusive 'Cambridge Apostles' while a student at Cambridge University. After Cambridge, the chapter explores Strachey's growing confidence as a writer and his membership in the 'Bloomsbury Group'. The chapter closes by examining Strachey's wartime experience writing '*Victorians*' and his anti-war activism, culminating in the publication of the book in 1918.

2.1. Lytton Strachey: Family Background

Giles Lytton Strachey was born 143 years ago, on the 1st of March, 1880. He had won the birth lottery: his aristocratic family occupied a lofty place in Britain's social hierarchy. The Stracheys had a long and rich history. One member of the clan had befriended the philosopher John Locke in the Seventeenth Century.[28] Another had developed innovative geological theories in the early Eighteenth, becoming a member of the Royal Society.[29] By 1880, the family was primarily known for their 'Indian connections and… imperial outlook,' to the extent that the Raj was referred to as the 'Government of the Stracheys'.[30] Born in 1817, Lytton's father spent much of his career in South Asia. He fought with distinction in the First Anglo-Sikh War, covertly explored Tibet in the late 1840s, and went on to serve in India's Public Works and Finance Departments.[31] Holroyd claims that 'it is largely to him that the country owed its extensive railways and canals'.[32] Lytton's mother also came from an elite

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[28] Ian Harris, 'Writing the Life of Locke', *Journal of Historical Biography*, Vol. VII (2010), 140

[29] Eds., 'John Strachey', '*Encyclopaedia Britannica 2013: Ultimate Edition*', accessed via https://www.britannica.com/biography/John-Strachey-British-geologist

[30] Barbara Caine, '*Bombay to Bloomsbury: A Biography of the Strachey Family*' (Oxford, 2005), 3; T.H. Holdich, 'Obituary: General Sir Richard Strachey, GSCI, FRS, LLD', *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. XXXI (1908), 342

[31] Derek J. Waller, '*The Pundits: British Exploration of Tibet and Central Asia*' (Lexington, 2013), 13

[32] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 36

background of colonial administrators. Lady Strachey was an early supporter of the suffragette movement, joining the National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1868 and later working for feminist charities in London.[33] The couple were members of London's elite, acquainting themselves with figures ranging from Francis Galton and J.S. Mill to Thomas Carlyle and Alfred Tennyson.[34]

Lytton was Richard Strachey's eleventh child. Playing with his siblings, the young Lytton 'liked to march up and down' his childhood house 'chanting what was apparently an epic poem' by the age of 4, according to diary entries from his mother.[35] Behaviour like this marked Lytton out in his mother's eyes, who then sat with Lytton on while she played the piano and gave him prominent roles in amateur theatrics.[36] The family was happy, if grappling with a sense of increasing economic insecurity: the long depression had badly hurt the fortunes of British aristocrats, who started to lose their economic ascendancy to manufacturers and businessmen.[37] Financial issues prompted the Stracheys to shift to a relatively cramped house in a less fashionable district in London. Hardly poverty, but a notable change from the atmosphere of seemingly unlimited prosperity enjoyed by earlier generations of Stracheys. Though Lytton received plenty of lessons from the adults around him, not least Marie Souvestre, a family friend who began Lytton's love of French literature, the time came to send him to school. He was initially sent to Parkstone School near Poole, being entrusted to the reformist headmaster Henry Forde. Lytton was not an ideal student. He was physically awkward and had little success studying Ancient Greek and Latin. However, his writing was good, as was his enthusiasm for performing in the school's plays: Forde reported back to London that 'it would not at all surprise me, if he were to become literary'.[38] Lytton found much to enjoy in Bournemouth. He loved the school's plays and swimming at nearby beaches. In one missive back to his family, he recounted that he had seen 'Mr Gladstone in a tug-boat going to pool', seeing the then

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[33] Barbara Caine, 'A Feminist Family: the Stracheys and feminism, 1860-1950', *Women's History Review*, Vol. XIV (2005), 386

[34] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 40

[35] Caine, 'A Feminist Family', 388

[36] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 37

[37] David Cannadine, '*The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*' (London, 1992), 90-2

[38] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 57

Leader of the Opposition in one of his many speaking tours.[39] Gladstone, then in his early 80s, was campaigning for the 1892 election, which resulted both in his electoral defeat and his injury at the hands of a 'middle aged bony woman' who threw a 'hard-piece of gingerbread' at the great statesman and almost left him blind.[40] Like Gladstone, he would not remain in Poole for long. His parents transferred him to a new school in 1893, but not before sending him on a voyage around the world with relatives in the Black Watch. Trip complete, Lytton was then sent to Abbotsholme school, an experimental school which subjected its pupils to a vigorous course of physical and intellectual training: the 'natural method'.[41] Despite continued physical ailment, Lytton settled in and became the head of his house in 1895, entitling him to a tin mitre on his cap and a walking stick.[42] He read Edward Gibbon's magisterial History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire and wrote satirical adaptations of the classic books around him. At Leamington, he also became infatuated with the other students around him, falling for 'young men who were good-looking and self-assured'.[43]

2.2. Cambridge and the Apostles

The next step in Strachey's education came in 1897, when he passed the examination to enter the University of Liverpool. Liverpool did not suit him. Though the city was in its heyday, the 'global centre' of the immense cotton industry, it held little joy for Strachey.[44] He described life in the city as a 'turmoil of dullness' in which the mere expectation of receiving a letter 'is the subject of frenzy.'[45] After two years he was sent away. The University of Cambridge, which offered Lytton a home from 1899 through to 1905, was a much better fit. While studying History at Trinity College, Lytton joined a series of student societies that would have an immense impact upon him. The first was the 'Midnight Society', set up by Strachey and some new friends, including Clive Bell and Leonard Woolf. The group would congregate in the late

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[39] Ibid., 58

[40] Roy Jenkins, '*Gladstone*' (London, 1995), 608

[41] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 64, 66

[42] Ibid., 74

[43] Ibid., 76

[44] Sven Beckert, '*Empire of Cotton: A Global History*' (New York, 2014), 257

[45] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 82

evening and give prepared literary readings through to the early hours of the morning.[46] According to Bell, the Midnight Society was the seed from which the wider 'Bloomsbury Group' eventually grew, a judgement supported by Banfield, who describes the society as 'the nucleus of Bloomsbury'.[47] Lytton was a central figure in the group: in one letter sent to a convalescent Strachey recovering in London from one of his many illnesses, Woolf complained that his absence had caused the 'temporary death of the Midnight Society', calling on his friend to return as soon as possible.[48] The next major discovery was the Cambridge Apostles. The Cambridge Apostles originated as a debating society in the early Nineteenth Century, becoming 'a rallying point for a number of intellectually gifted and ambitious young men' and boasting alumni including Alfred Tennyson, T.H. Green and Henry Sidgwick by the time of Lytton's arrival.[49] Once carefully selected from the student body, new Apostles would be invited to regular dinners and meetings, all focussed on debate and intellectual exchange. The society had a progressive character, with Allen describing its deliberations as having 'a distinctly liberal tinge' and its membership as enjoying 'faith in itself as an intellectual elite.'[50] The Apostle's meetings gave Strachey a chance to voice and develop his increasingly subversive intellectual positions. The papers he delivered where strident in their criticism of contemporary moral norms. For instance, in 1902, Lytton delivered an essay titled 'Christ or Caliban?', which described contemporary British culture as 'artificial and comatose' and expressed Strachey's desire to 'put myself back into one or other of those more violent ages where railways and fig leaves were equally unknown.'[51] In another Apostle paper, Strachey describes imperial governors as 'abominably corrupt' and argues that 'nothing could be more wicked than conquering neighbouring states except sending expeditions to the tops of

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[46] Ibid., 96

[47] Ann Banfield, 'Cambridge Bloomsbury', in Rosner (ed.), 'The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group', 33

[48] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 102

[49] Peter Allen, 'A Victorian Intellectual Elite: Records of the Cambridge Apostles, 1820-77', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. XXXIII (1989), 99; Daniela Donnini Maccio, 'Ethics, economics and power in the Cambridge Apostle' internationalism between the two world wars', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. XXII (2016), 697

[50] Allen, 'A Victorian Intellectual Elite', 106, 109

[51] Lytton Strachey, 'Christ or Caliban?', in Todd Avery (ed.), '*Unpublished Works of Lytton Strachey*' (Abingdon, 2016), 24

mountains.'[52] A double blow to the example of his father. Alongside these broadsides, Strachey helped to develop the doctrine of 'higher sodomy' with other Apostles, advocating sexual relationships between 'intelligent men' as the highest form of human connection.[53] Combined with his passionate infatuations with other students, Strachey was subverting the codes of orthodox behaviour in late Victorian Britain in thought and practice. Membership in the Apostles did not only offer intellectual nourishment, but also continued Lytton's social adventure towards the heart of the British literary world. Previous fixtures of the Midnight Society such as Leonard Woolf and Saxon Sidney-Turner were elected to the Society alongside Lytton, to be joined both by James Strachey, Lytton's younger brother, and J.M. Keynes, who would become a central figure in Strachey's life.[54] At the University, Strachey produced immense volumes of prose and verse, weighing in on the endless debates that echoed through the limestone cloisters. During this time, he became strongly influenced by the philosopher G.E. Moore, who argued that what is 'good' in life is indefinable, and must be felt by the individual, rather than received from moral codes. Avery notes that Strachey would describe himself as a 'disciple' of this individualistic, anti-authoriarian code for at least the next decade.[55] He also began to write for prominent British newspapers, publishing reviews and articles in the Spectator and the Independent Review.[56] However, his largest piece of work during the Cambridge years was a major dissertation on Warren Hasting. Lytton Strachey dedicated months to researching Hasting's trial, an endeavour which did not exactly inspire him to become a historian: he wrote in August 1903 that 'I'd always rather be doing something else.'[57] However, a successful thesis was his ticket to remaining in Cambridge as a Fellow, a position he was intent on reaching: Lytton declared to Sydney-Turner that his 'life depends' on

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[52] Lytton Strachey, 'Shall we be Missionaries?', in Ibid., 75

[53] Taddeo, '*Lytton Strachey and the search for modern sexual identity*', 23

[54] Ann Banfield, 'Cambridge Bloomsbury', in Rosner (ed.), 'The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group', 33

[55] Todd Avery, ''This intricate commerce of souls': The Origins and Some Early Expressions of Lytton Strachey's Ethics', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. XIII (2004), 193

[56] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 165

[57] Ibid., 126

the success of his work.[58] It was not to be. Strachey's thesis was rejected by the academic board in Cambridge, leaving the author to return to London in 1905.

2.3. The Bloomsbury Group

After having his thesis thrown out, Strachey moved back into the family home, which had been once again downsized and moved to the leafy suburb of Hampstead. Family life was steady: his elder brothers worked for the Empire in India and Whitehall, his sisters and mother campaigned for the suffragette movement, trying to conscript Lytton for their processions and protests.[59] Most of his friends moved to London, and the Apostles remained an important part of Lytton's life. He continued to see himself primarily as a member of the society, joining their discussions of philosophers like Henry Sidgwick: 'all the Apostles were reading' his autobiography.[60] However, as time went on Strachey's Apostolic link was joined by his key role in the emerging 'Bloomsbury Group' of London-based writers, artists and intellectuals. From November 1906, they began to hold evening gatherings every Thursday. By 1907, a firm sense of community had emerged between the clutch of Apostles and new arrivals like the Stephens sisters, Virginia and Vanessa.[61] The presence of the intellectually and socially flamboyant sisters invigorated the Cambridge boys, who Virginia Stephens initially saw as placidly 'folded… up in the corners of sofas, silently pulling at their pipes and chuckling at some Latin joke.'[62] The group, in their own undeniably privileged way, tried to reject the genteel habits of their families and contemporaries. E.M. Forster later described their approval of 'the decay of smartness and fashion', while Virginia approved of the Bloomsbury 'triumph [of] having worked out a view of life which was not by any means corrupt or sinister or merely intellectual, rather ascetic and austere.'[63] In practice, this meant living away

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Caine, 'A Feminist Family', 390

[60] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 184

[61] David Gadd, '*The Loving Friends: A Portrait of Bloomsbury*' (London, 1974), 20; Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*', 142

[62] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 244

[63] E.M. Forster, '*Two Cheers for Democracy*' (London, 1965), 111; Quoted in Lee, '*Virginia Woolf*', 268

from families, embarking on a complicated web of sexual and romantic relations and taking the progressive opinion on the role of women and the importance of patriotism. Strachey discovered a passionate affection for Duncan Grant, a fellow member of the Group and a family friend.[64] Lytton was obsessed with Grant- the news that Grant and Keynes had fallen deeply in love with each other is described by Holroyd as 'the most wretched' shock of Lytton's life.[65] He also grew very close to Virginia Stephens, to the extent that Lytton proposed marriage to her in February, a proposal that she 'immediately accepted'. Luckily for the would-be couple, Lytton sensed 'it would be death if she accepted me, and I managed, of course, to get out of it before the end of the conversation.'[66] Politics was largely absent from the group's discussions. Despite the liberal inclinations of most Bloomsbury set members, they did not display much awareness of 'sense of racial and cultural superiority' that for decades had been 'embedded in English identity' as the metropolis of a global empire.[67] When political issues like imperialism did crop up, the members cannot be seen as far ahead of prevailing public sentiment. In one missive from Lytton Strachey to Leonard Woolf during the latter's time in Ceylon, Strachey writes that 'I long to pay you a visit. . . . I could be so lazy while you were condemning blacks to death, dreaming every kind of wonder.'[68] This odious comment aside, Strachey was slowly coming into his own as a writer. His primary work continued to be journalism, reviewing books and plays for the Spectator and other papers. More serious projects started to emerge. In the winter of 1908, he drafted a manuscript for a potential novel, one 'directed against the snobbery and the intrigue of fashionable society and reactionary politics.'[69] In January 1912, his first book was published: 'Landmarks in French Literature'. The book was a quiet success, selling over 12,000 copies by the outbreak of the First World War, eventually being reprinted 8 times during his lifetime alone.[70] Another symptom of Strachey's emerging self-confidence was his beard. Clearly excited by this change,

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[64] Simon Watney, '*The Art of Duncan Grant*' (London, 1999), 20

[65] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 229

[66] Ibid., 252

[67] Gretchen Holbrook Gerzina, 'Bloomsbury and Empire', in Rosner (ed.), '*The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*', 113, 115

[68] Ibid., 116

[69] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 248

[70] Ibid., 269

Lytton wrote to his mother that 'its colour is very much admired, and it is generally considered extremely effective, though some ill-bred persons have been observed to laugh.'[71]

2.4. Lytton Strachey: Wartime Years

With '*Landmarks in French Literature*', Lytton continued to criticise the established cultural order in the United Kingdom. In the book, he contrasts the deeply-held respect for literature and writers in France with English tendency to 'throw off their glorious masterpieces by the way, as if they were trifles.'[72] He used some of the proceeds to rent 'The Chestnuts', a small farmhouse in the Berkshire Downs. It was here, amongst thatched cottages and newly built redbrick houses, that the idea to write a book about the Victorians first came to Lytton. Strachey imagined a work called 'Victorian silhouettes', covering a dozen Victorian characters, mostly scientists. As he explained to Morrell in a letter sent in October 1912, he was instead going to write 'from a slightly cynical standpoint.'[73] He also aimed to write a shorter piece than was typical for the time, with Strachey hoping for 'a series of short lives of eminent persons.'[74] Strachey went to work on Cardinal Manning, his first target. From this point on, '*Eminent Victorians*' was never far from his mind. On a trip to Rome in 1913, he could not prevent himself from meditating on 'Cardinal Manning's mysterious meeting with Pius IX' decades earlier.[75] Writing for friends and papers, Strachey's anti-establishment position continued to deepen. One 1913 essay, 'Voltaire and England', is full of praise for the French thinker who declared that Christianity 'is assuredly the most ridiculous… religion which has ever infected this world', resonating clearly with Strachey's self-perception as an iconoclast ready to take down his forefathers' pretensions.[76] In the essay, Strachey praised the 'whispered message of tolerance' and 'enlightened curiosity' that Voltaire's works had brought to

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[71] Paul Levy (ed.), '*The Letters of Lytton Strachey*' (Ann Arbor, 2005). 302

[72] Lytton Strachey, '*Landmarks in French Literature*' (Oxford, 1912), 35

[73] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 326

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid., 345

[76] Quoted in William Cavanaugh, 'The Invention of Fanaticism', in Sarah Coakley, '*Faith, Rationality and the Passions*' (London, 2012), 37

England.[77] Embroiled in writing and Bloomsbury Group drama, the arrival of the First World War did not particularly distress Lytton at first. In one letter to his brother in late September 1914, he admitted that 'I don't much care about England's being victorious (apart from personal questions)- but I should object to France being crushed.'[78] For many, the onset of war seemed quite a distant matter, rather than an event that required a dash to the nearest recruiting station. Charles Bell noted that plenty of people did not seem to be taking the prospect of war seriously, noting that crowds in London seemed to feel 'Let us have a good Bank Holiday, and fight the Germans afterwards.'[79] The Bloomsbury Group took their time in coming to the Pacifist position they would champion during the middle and later stages of the conflict. Initially, some members flirted with the prospect of joining the fighting. For instance, James Strachey and Bell initially sought information on joining the army in non-combatant roles, while E.M. Forster volunteered his services to the Red Cross in Egypt, where he would remain until the end of the fighting.

As the war went on, this detachment collapsed under the pressure of wartime realities. Keynes, now teaching at Cambridge, was an early convert. In one missive from King's College the now-economist wrote 'I am absolutely and completely desolated… it is unbearable to see day by day the youths going away first to boredom and discomfort and then to slaughter.'[80] By 1915, Bloomsbury Group books like Bell's 'Peace at Once' were advocating for 'a stop to this murderous folly' and being publically burnt by the Mayor of London for it.[81] Other members, notably Bertrand Russell, were leading major peace movements like the 'No Conscription Fellowship'.[82] In this furious atmosphere, continuing work on 'Eminent Victorians' seemed an impossible task. However, as time went on, Strachey started to use the book to pour out his feelings of frustration and anger. As Janes notes, Eminent Victorians

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[77] Lytton Strachey, 'Voltaire and England', in Lytton Strachey, '*Books and Characters, French & English*' (New York, 1922), 125

[78] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 368

[79] Quoted in Catriona Pennell, '*A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*' (Oxford, 2012), 29

[80] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 375

[81] Clive Bell, '*Peace at Once*' (Manchester, 1915), 9

[82] Thomas Kennedy, '*The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscription Fellowship, 1914-1919*' (Fayetteville, 1981), 23

'implied that the recent disasters were at least partly the result of the persistence of Victorian peculiarities and repressions in British institutions', an argument corroborated by Avery, who notes that the work 'is concerned with the ethics of leadership, which he regarded as requiring a new moral code.'[83] By mid-1915, the combination of a looming conscription bill and relentless military propaganda pushed Bloomsbury opposition to new heights. Lytton wrote to his brother that 'the conscription crisis has been agitating these quarters considerably… some say that Lloyd George is verging towards the madhouse cell.'[84] Strachey became a more and more public advocate of pacifism and resistance to conception, publishing essays against the war in the *War and Peace Journal* edited by Leonard Woolf and Norman Angell.[85] He implored friends who were working for the British state, such as Keynes, to stop contributing to such a morally bankrupt endeavour. In February 1916, Lytton dropped off a militaristic speech made by the Secretary to the Treasury, accompanied by a short letter: 'Dear Maynard, Why are you still at the Treasury? Yours, Lytton.'[86] Keynes replied in a letter that recognised that he could see 'a point at which he would think it necessary to leave' the civil service, and started donating to the National Council against Conscription a few days later.[87] This donation did not prevent the passage of the Military Service Act, which introduced conscription for unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 41. The Bloomsbury Group, characterised by Froula as in opposition to 'belligerent nationals, and war on many fronts', was aghast.[88] For Vanessa Bell, the introduction of conscription was a sufficient betrayal of England's special qualities that 'I don't see any reason for bringing up one's children to be English.'[89] Writing to friends, the bill threw Lytton into despondency, asking in early 1916 'what difference would it make if the Germans were here?'[90]

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[83] Janes, 'Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness and John Maynard Keynes', 21

[84] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 401

[85] Christine Froula, 'War, Peace and Internationalism', in Rosner (ed.), 'The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group', 97

[86] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 407

[87] Ibid.

[88] Froula, 'War, Peace and Internationalism', in Rosner (ed.), 'The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group', 96

[89] Quoted in Jonathan Atkins, '*A War of Individuals: Bloomsbury attitudes to the Great War*' (Manchester, 2002), 38

[90] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 405

The Military Service Bill would prove more than an intellectual challenge for Lytton, as he now needed to escape from the obligations it imposed upon him. Lytton hoped to receive a political exemption from military service and register as a Conscientious Objector. His route to exemption was to go through the 'local tribunals', which heard appeals. Work at the courts was frantic. The Birmingham Local Tribunal alone gave decisions on over 90,000 cases throughout the war.[91] Trying to receive an exemption for service could be a painstaking and taxing experience, particularly for those seeking conscientious objections. Hodgson notes that these groups were 'stereotyped as 'weak-willed' and mentally pusillanimous' during their hearings, and the conditions for success were made purposefully difficult: in early 1916 Prime Minister Lloyd George declared that he 'would only consider the best means of making the path of that class [conscientious objectors] a very hard one.'[92] Moral objectors to the war also faced widespread hostility from the wider community. Major newspapers published pieces that called for the long imprisonment of objectors and conscientious objectors faced physical assault.[93] In one interwar memoir, a scholar recalled that 'in general society you could scarcely mention their existence, much less claim acquaintance with an individual C.O.s, so great was the disgust and abhorrence called forth.'[94] Strachey was well suited to tackle these obstacles. He came from an aristocratic family and flowed in the same social circle as Prime Ministers and famous writers. He was not a nationalist torn between his country and his principles. He could also point to a clear record of public and ardent opposition to the war. Lytton's hearing was held in early March 1916.[95] Lytton recounted in a letter to his sister that 'a vast crowd of my supporters' came with him for the 3 hour trial, and that he himself was armed with 'documents, legal points, conscientious declarations, etc.'[96] Despite this showing, the tribunal did not immediately provide Strachey with the exemption he sought, instead referring him to medical officers for a further examination. Having

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[91] Adrian Gregory, *'The Last Great War'*, 102

[92] Max Hodgson, 'Pathologising 'Refusal': Prison, Health and Conscientious Objectors during the First World War', *Social History of Medicine*, Vol XXXV (2022), 973

[93] Lois Bibbings, 'Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objects in the Great War', *Social and Legal Studies*, Vol. XII (2003), 345

[94] Quoted in Ibid.

[95] Atkin, '*A War of Individuals'*, 38

[96] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 412

endured strings of illness for almost the entirety of his life, Strachey was in no fit condition to fight in the army or complete any useful training. He was given a medical exemption and could rest with the knowledge he was not to be sent to the trenches. Atkin notes that despite the freedom from military service this implied, this result was not enough for Lytton, who drafted an appeal that expressed his displeasure at the tribunal's decision to 'withhold the only form of exemption which would appropriately meet my objection.'[97] An incomplete victory notwithstanding, Strachey could return to writing his anti-war polemics and, in the background, continue to work on '*Eminent Victorians.*'

Two years of relatively less public pacifist advocacy followed his medical exemption. Holroyd writes that 'he preferred to campaign by writing Eminent Victorians.'[98] In contrast to Bertrand Russell, who was sentenced to jail under the Defence of the Realm Act in 1917, spending the rest of the war reading 'enormously' in a prison he found 'quite agreeable', Lytton kept a relatively low profile.[99] Alongside writing and pacifist activism, he sparked up a 'strange liaison' with Dora Carrington, an artist and Bloomsbury acquaintance. Though the couple continued to sleep with other people, Carrington's attachment to Strachey 'grew still stronger until it seemed to infect every particle of her being'.[100] She did not mind Lytton's ongoing relationships with other men: 'they adored her; she enjoyed their playful company.'[101] '*Eminent Victorians*' was creeping towards completion. As with several other famous works published by the Bloomsbury Group, which Nozen describes as a product of 'collaboration among the friends', Strachey's final drafts reflected extensive input from his social circle.[102] Throughout the wartime years, he continually tested out his drafts on his friends. While at times they could be unimpressed by Lytton's work, with Duncan Grant falling asleep during one reading of the last essay, Strachey's role in the Bloomsbury Group significantly affected both the chatty style of the book and moderated his tendency to excess, with figures like Vanessa Bell guiding Lytton as he

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[97] Atkin, '*A War of Individuals*', 28

[98] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 409

[99] Bertrand Russell, '*Autobiography*' (London, 1998), 256

[100] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 427

[101] Ibid., 478

[102] Nozen, Amani & Ziyarat, 'Blooming of the Novel in the Bloomsbury Group', 325

finalised his drafts.[103] By Christmas 1917, it was time to look for a publisher. Lytton's manuscripts were sent to publishing contacts, one of whom later recalled that 'I had hardly taken the typescript up again after dinner when... there was an air raid by Germans. The whirring of aeroplanes overhead… [and] the frightful thunder of a gun in the field at the bottom of our garden, would all have served to distract a mind less happily engaged; but… I consorted that evening with Cardinal Manning, Thomas Arnold, Florence Nightingale, and General Gordon. The Nineteenth Century had come alive again.'[104] Everyone agreed Strachey had a bestseller on his hands. By March, Lytton could report to friends that 'my hope is that in about six weeks or so 'Eminent Victorians' will burst upon an astonished world.'[105]

Lytton Strachey was a late bloomer, publishing '*Eminent Victorians*' at 37. As his friends later observed, despite the fact that he 'had so long a period of incubating', Strachey emerged as a mature, incisive writer in 1918.[106] From his upbringing as the runt of a large aristocratic litter, he had been immersed in the intellectual world of the British elite, fraternising with famous writers and thinkers through his parents. At Cambridge, he had come into his own as a cultural iconoclast, mocking the pretensions of Late Victorian and Edwardian society and living in defiance to the restrictions they set out for him. In peacetime and wartime, he played a central role in the Bloomsbury Group as they sought to live in a better way than their forefathers, protesting both the moral codes of contemporary Britain and the war. All these influences and experiences would culminate in '*Eminent Victorians*'.

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[103] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 465

[104] Quoted in Ibid., 479

[105] Ibid.

[106] Desmond MacCarthy, quoted in Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*', 264, 265

3. The Victorian Other

This chapter considers Strachey's understanding of the Victorians. After providing a brief summary of the book, it considers the common characteristics shared by all of its characters, using them to build up a picture of how Strachey viewed the 'Victorian Age'. It then explores Strachey's presentation further by considering how fairly it represents the Victorians. Lastly, Strachey's picture of the Victorians is contrasted with wider Edwardian stereotypes of their predecessors and the relationship between members of the Bloomsbury Group and the previous generations.

3.1. Eminent Victorians: Summary

'*Eminent Victorians*' was released on the 9th of May, 1918. A curious reader plucking the slender volume from the bookshop shelves found a book with five component parts. The small preface sets out Strachey's 'manifesto for twentieth-century biography.'[107] Lytton advocates the rejection of the 'fat volumes' of 'ill-digested masses of material' then typical in biographical writing and instead aim to 'throw a sudden, revealing searchlight into obscure recesses, hitherto undivined.'[108] Lytton then jumps into the first and largest essay, covering Henry Edward Manning. Manning was a major religious leader in Nineteenth-Century Britain. We see him develop from ambitious young scholar to despotic leader of English Catholicism, a 'born autocrat' with 'immense popularity' in British society.[109] Particularly in Manning's struggle with the ascetic figure of John Henry Newman, another major English Catholic, we are exposed to the inner workings of religious politics in Victorian England, with machiavellian schemes and plots just as useful as pious learning. Strachey's next target is Florence Nightingale, following her successful struggle with the dysfunctional 'inferno' of mid-Century British government and her unsuccessful fight against old age.[110] The Nightingale that emerges from his story is rude and disagreeable, bolstering her authority with bitter sarcasm rather than saintly virtue. Strachey's third

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[107] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 500
[108] Lytton Strachey, '*Eminent Victorians*' (London, 1918), vi, v
[109] Ibid., 29, 40
[110] Ibid., 44

chapter covers the life of Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby School and a key figure in the development of Britain's public education ethos. Arnold is, in Lytton's eyes, a zealot whose religious imperatives were imposed with 'awful grandeur' and at the expense of 'the actual sphere of teaching.'[111] Despite his dubious achievements, Strachey notes the widespread admiration which Arnold enjoyed in Victorian Britain. Strachey's final chapter focusses on General Charles Gordon. We are confronted with the oddness of Gordon's personality, from his 'half-gliding, half-tripping' movement to the 'childish sincerity' of his eyes.[112] The book ends with Gordon's death in the Siege of Khartoum in 1885, which Queen Victoria declares left a 'STAIN… upon England.'[113]

3.2. Presentation of the Victorian Age

Lytton intended for the figures of '*Eminent Victorians*' to operate as vignettes into the wider Victorian period. Despite Strachey's declaration in the preface that 'the History of the Victorian age will never be written,' it is clear at other points in the book that he feels his characters and their stories represent the times they lived in.[114] For instance, at the start of the essay on Cardinal Manning Strachey writes that the interest for the 'modern inquirer… depends upon the light which his career throws upon the spirit of his age.'[115] Reading through the book and considering the characters it presents, a distinct impression of the Victorian period emerges. Britain in the Nineteenth Century appears as a society run by a set of people deeply committed to their religious faith, distinguished by their capacity and enthusiasm for hard work, and adherent to a masculine ethic of leading by strength of character. Strachey does not shy from the fact that this intensity often leaves the Victorians unpleasant, deluded people.

A key similarity between all four characters in the book is their religiosity. Describing Nightingale, Strachey highlights her pious reputation as 'the saintly, self-

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[111] Ibid., 64
[112] Ibid., 72
[113] Ibid., 99
[114] Ibid., 1
[115] Ibid., 7

sacrificing woman, the delicate maiden of high degree who threw aside the pleasures of a life of ease to succour the afflicted; the Lady with the Lamp… consecrating with the radiance of her goodness the dying soldier's couch.'[116] He also noted that in old age, Nightingale applied her furious appetite for work to the church, with an Elderly Nightingale contemplating that 'Christianity itself was not without its defects. She would rectify these errors. She would correct the mistakes of the Churches; she would point out just where Christianity was wrong.'[117] Lytton presents Manning as a deeply religious figure, quoting the Cardinal as attesting that 'I have in these last three weeks felt as if our Lord had called me by name. Everything else has passed out of my mind'.[118] Manning is presented as a stereotypically Catholic figure, whose piety couples with his ambition and domineering tendencies, as in this description of his ascension to the conclave: 'he seized it [power] with all the avidity of a born autocrat, whose appetite for supreme dominion had been whetted by long years of enforced abstinence and the hated simulations of submission. He was the ruler of Roman Catholic England, and he would rule.'[119] Arnold, in contrast to Manning, appears to us as an arch-Protestant, who channels his faith into his work. Christianity is the guiding star of Arnold's reforms, with the Doctor advocating the transformation of Rugby into 'a place of really Christian education.'[120] Arnold is, in Lytton's eyes, a zealot whose character was 'at last revealed' when he delivered sermons to crowds of students. [121] General Gordon's almost childish faith is shown throughout the final chapter. It seems that all of the great shifts of the General's life were interpreted by him as the sole result of divine providence. Appointed to Sudan for the first time, Strachey quotes Gordon as saying 'God turns events one way or another, whether man likes it or not... Events will go as God likes.''[122] We are told that Gordon's primary concern before his departure from London to the Sudan was to ensure that 'every

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[116] Ibid., 34
[117] Ibid., 43
[118] Ibid., 25
[119] Ibid., 29
[120] Ibid., 63
[121] Ibid., 64
[122] Ibid., 78

member of the Cabinet would receive a copy of Dr. Samuel Clarke's Scripture Promises.'[123] Religion dominates the lives of all four Eminent Victorians.

What is also unavoidable in all four figures is their ferocious devotion to work. Strachey does not scoff at Gordon's unceasing and ungrateful labour as the governor of Sudan, with the book emphasising the immensity of the task the General faced: 'with a few hundred Egyptian soldiers he had to suppress insurrections, make roads, establish fortified posts, and enforce the government monopoly of ivory. All this he accomplished.'[124] Nightingale's the urge to work consumes her, as we see in Strachey's depiction of her religious faith: 'She felt towards [God] as she might have felt towards a glorified sanitary engineer… one has the impression that Miss Nightingale has got the Almighty too into her clutches, and that, if He is not careful, she will kill Him with overwork.'[125] From the first page of Manning's biography, we are presented with his immense energy. In the first paragraph of the essay, Strachey argues that 'what is most obviously striking in the history of Manning's career is the persistent strength of his innate characteristics. Through all the changes of his fortunes the powerful spirit of the man worked on undismayed.'[126] In the essay on Dr Arnold, energy and determination is worked into the physical body of the headmaster, whose 'bushy eyebrows and curling whiskers, his straight nose and bulky chin, his firm and upward-curving lower lip—all these revealed a temperament of ardour and determination.'[127] Strachey did not flatter his subjects, but in all four essays he cannot avoid acknowledging their intense devotion to working hard.

A third key aspect of the characters we find in 'Eminent Victorians' is their depiction as stereotypically masculine figures: they direct, they attack and they try to dominate. Strachey directly refuses to write Nightingale as a gentle 'lady of the lamp,' instead revealing her as an aggressive woman clashing with and trying to overrule those around her. Strachey is keenly aware of the gender expectations this presentation subverts. When describing the partnership between Nightingale and a British Minister, he writes that 'the man who acts, decides, and achieves; the woman who encourages,

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[123] Ibid., 84
[124] Ibid., 79
[125] Ibid., 46
[126] Ibid., 7
[127] Ibid., 62

applauds, and—from a distance—inspires: the combination is common enough; but…
in her case it is almost true to say that the roles were reversed; the qualities of pliancy
and sympathy fell to the man, those of command and initiative to the woman.'[128] In
the essay on Dr. Arnold, we see the development of a code of masculinity for wealthy
Englishmen, with Arnold's efforts to forge a 'noble manhood' from physical activity
and piety replacing the lax system that preceded it, with Strachey noting that before
Arnold's reforms, 'the boys were free to enjoy themselves as they liked; to bathe, to
fish, to ramble for long afternoons in the country, collecting eggs or gathering
flowers.'[129] With Gordon, we see the General perform his soldierly duties without fear
or hesitation, from Strachey's declaration that the soldier 'behaved with conspicuous
gallantry' during the Crimean War to depictions of Gordon 'walking at the head of his
troops with nothing but a light cane in his hand, he seemed to pass through every
danger with the scatheless equanimity of a demi-god.'[130] Though he will go on to
critique the effects of Nineteenth-Century masculinity, Strachey clearly shows his
characters as typically masculine figures.

For all their energy and devotion, '*Eminent Victorians*' presents its characters
as singularly difficult people. Manning's ascension through the ranks of the clergy is
presented less as the result of exceptional devotion to religion and more the story of a
wily politician, achieving his promotions with crafty moves in the 'papal game' of
Catholic politics while his religious 'back-slidings were many'.[131] The Nightingale
that emerges from his retelling is rude and disagreeable, bolstering her authority with
sarcasm and bitterness: even if she is 'heroic,' her character does not merit the
'heroism of that simple sort so dear to the readers of novels and the compilers of
hagiographies.'[132] Arnold is, in Lytton's eyes, an extremely harsh figure, whose
religious commands were imposed with the threat of corporal punishment hanging
above them.[133] We see Gordon slip into alcoholism and and explosions of wrath in
Sudan: readers are confronted with the accusation that this paragon of imperialism

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[128] Ibid., 51

[129] Ibid., 63, 70

[130] Ibid., 73, 74

[131] Ibid., 22

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid., 64

heroism 'would slap the face of his Arab aide-de-camp in a sudden excess of fury, or set upon his Alsatian servant and kick him until he screamed.'[134] While we still see Gordon enact great feats of courage, his triumphs are qualified with mistreatment. Gordon's violent tendencies are only worsened by his appetite for booze: under intense pressure in Sudan, Strachey writes that 'under the parching African sun… for months together, we are told, he would drink nothing but pure water; and then … water that was not so pure.'[135] For all their energy and sense of duty, these characters are not valorised by Strachey: he shows their faults and failings without hesitation.

3.3. Misrepresenting the Victorians

Strachey created an artificial picture of the Victorian Age, representing it not as it was, but as he wished it to be. As Altick notes, Strachey resorts 'to fictional devices such as staged scenes, imagined interior monologues and conversations, and dislocations of time' throughout the book.[136] He relied upon existing biographies of Manning instead of correspondence and primary literature, focussing on style so much that Pionke claims that '*Eminent Victorians*' is 'not a biography.'[137] Another historian described Strachey's approach as 'without fear and without research.'[138] Bertrand Russell saw his protege as 'indifferent to historical truth.'[139] His sources do not provide much grounding for a nuanced, accurate portrayal of his subjects. Strachey only read one book specifically on Florence Nightingale during his research for the book. Ni Dhuill notes that Strachey's reliance on a strongly partisan 1895 biography of Cardinal Manning partially accounts for the 'casual anti-Catholic prejudice and stereotype' in the first chapter of the book.[140] This should not be regarded as amateurism merely.

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[134] Ibid., 77

[135] Ibid.

[136] Richard Altick, 'Eminent Victorianism: what Lytton Strachey hath wrought', *The American Scholar*, Vol. LXIV (1995), 82

[137] Albert D. Pionke, ''Cardinal Manning' and the Redisciplining of Biography', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. LXI (2018), 88

[138] Carl Becker, quoted in Altick, 'Eminent Victorianism', 83

[139] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 500

[140] Caitriona Ni Dhuill, 'Biography as Exposure: Lytton Strachey's Eminent Victorians', in Edward Saunders & Wilhelm Hemecker (eds.), '*Biography in Theory'* (Berlin, 2017), 78

Strachey was well aware of what constituted serious historical work, having spent months studying in the British Library for his ill-fated thesis on Warren Hastings. For Altick, this lack of academic rigour is a sign of failure: he brands '*Victorians*' as a piece of 'intellectual dishonesty' that amounts to nothing more than 'cheap shows aimed at straw figures.'[141] This line of attack misses Strachey's point. A decade before writing '*Victorians*', Strachey had penned an essay for his Apostolic colleagues that declared that if 'we are to justify history at all, we must do so by some other method than by trying to prove its practical utility,' especially with respect to its capacity to influence human actions toward 'good results' in the future.'[142] By exaggerating the distinctiveness of the Victorians, Strachey could more effectively point out their mistakes and subtly suggest alternatives, hopefully helping readers learn from their predecessor's mistakes.

Strachey's book leaves out much of the complexity of the Victorian Age. For example, despite Strachey's focus on intense religiosity, the Nineteenth Century saw plenty of change that suggests the solidity of faith in Britain was starting to crumble. For instance, Berman notes that key Victorian thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and J.S. Mill developed extensive arguments for atheism, while new groups such as the Fabian Society advocated for reforms that sidelined religious institutions in important community functions like primary education.[143] Furthermore, Strachey's cast of four industrious, domineering figures obscures extensive Victorian debate and difference regarding proper masculine conduct and values. Pividori notes that plenty of ostensibly 'manly' figures in this period, such as soldiers stationed in India, were capable of rejecting key aspects of Victorian masculinity, such as the sense of superiority: one soldier wrote of himself and Indians as 'victims of the same system' of imperialism in the 1880s.[144] Fisher notes that the fierce debates raged between Victorian thinkers over appropriate masculine values, for example between art critics Ruskin and Pater

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[141] Altick, 'Eminent Victorianism', 89

[142] Todd Avery, ''The Historian of the Future': Lytton Strachey and modernist historiography between the Two Cultures', *ELH,* Vol. LXXVII (2010), 854

[143] David Berman, '*A History of Atheism in Britain: From Hobbes to Russell*' (London, 1988), 206

[144] Cristina Pividori & Andrew Monnickendam, 'War Heroes and Pacifics on the Same Front: Re-reading Heroism in Two Imperial War Memoirs', *Alicante Journal of English Studies*, Vol. XXV (2012), 358

over the significance of Renaissance hedonism. While 'Ruskin… associated the Renaissance with "bestial vice" … Pater also sees sexuality and the "pursuit of pleasure" as central but… values these things.'[145] Emotional repression was not celebrated everywhere in Victorian Britain. Taddeo notes that serious discussions over homosexual romance and behaviour 'existed within the [Cambridge Apostles] long before the Edwardians refashioned it as the "Higher Sodomy."', an argument supported by Dellamore, who notes that mid-Victorian apostles such as Alfred Tennyson and Arthur Hallam did not shy from 'express[ing] desire for other men.'[146] '*Eminent Victorians*' obscures as much of the Victorian period as it reveals. We are given a partial look into the period, which cannot be considered as merely a case of poor scholarship on Strachey's part. In seeking to 'throw a searchlight' on the past, Strachey selectively provided stories and characters that give the impression of a masculine, intensely driven Victorian Age.

3.6. Wider Stereotypes of the Victorian period

Strachey's image of the Victorian Age fit uneasily with broader perceptions of the Nineteenth Century in Edwardian and wartime Britain. On the one hand, his emphasis on the efforts of Victorian figures to vigorously maintain a masculine standard of behaviour and work hard in pursuit of their goals chimed in well with contemporary perceptions of the Victorians. As Richard Soloway notes, the idea that the British character and the vigour of British people was in a 'downward slope' caught hold at the turn of the century.[147] Moments like the Second Boer War, which gave rise to suggestions that half of the population was 'unfit for military service' prompted serious concern about general standards of health.[148] In one 1914 periodical, a writer judged that the quality of the 'British stock' had become so low that it constituted a

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[145] Will Fisher, 'The Sexual Politics of Victorian Historiographical Writing about the Renaissance', *Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. XIV (2007), 48

[146] Julie Anne Taddeo, 'Plato's Apostles: Edwardian Cambridge and the 'New Style of Love'', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. VIII (1997), 198; Richard Dellamora, '*Masculine Desire: The Sexual Politics of Victorian Aestheticism*' (Chapel Hill, 1990), 16

[147] Richard Soloway, '*Demography and degeneration: Eugenics and the declining birthrate in twentieth-century Britain*' (Chapel Hill, 2014), 7

[148] Hodgson, 'Pathologising 'Refusal', 975

'grave national danger.'[149] In this climate of worry, the achievements and character of Nineteenth-Century Britons was repeatedly drawn upon for moral examples. General Gordon was a particularly popular choice for commemoration: McKenzie describes Gordon as the 'apotheosis' of the 'Christian Military Hero' in Edwardian Britain, while Dawson writes of the General as 'the most renowned of all exemplars of imperial virtue.'[150] If time had whetted the intense valorisation of Gordon that had followed his death in Sudan, for example with Keir Hardie's depiction of the General as 'the most Christ-like man this country has ever seen,' his popularity survived the Edwardian period, as seen in his prominent and flattering role in '*Sixty Years a Queen,*' a 1913 film covering the life of Queen Victoria.[151] While Strachey recognised this commemoration, emphasising the masculinity of his characters, he stepped away from the Edwardian valorisation of the Victorians in his presentation of the past generation as morally dubious. Many Edwardians drew upon the Victorians as moral examples, from the fans of General Gordon to figures like Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Scouting Movement and victor of the Siege of Mafeking, who wrote to the young members of his movement, encouraging them to defend the great achievements of their predecessors by emphasising that 'your forefathers worked hard, fought hard and died hard to make the Empire for you'.[152] Though Strachey accepted and incorporated wider perceptions of the Victorian Age as a time of energy and success, he stepped away from typical perceptions of the past by condemning his characters.

The critical presentation of the Victorians in Strachey's book can be attributed to the influence of the Bloomsbury Group. Strachey's conception of the Victorian Age was certainly affected by discussions he had with other members of the group. As Mullin argues, Bloomsbury Group members were deeply interested in the Victorian

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[149] Alice Bonzom, 'Human Derelicts and the Deterioration of the Nation: Discourses of Identity and Otherness in Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *Revue Française de civilisation Britannique*, Vol XXVII (2022), 1

[150] John Mackenzie, '*Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850-1950*' (Manchester, 1992), 125; Graham Dawson, '*Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities*' (London, 1994), 146

[151] Quoted in Max Jones, 'National Hero and Very Queer Fish: Empire, Sexuality and the British Remembrance of General Gordon, 1918-72', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol XXVI (2015), 181

[152] Anthony Fletcher, 'Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of Victorian Manliness', *Journal of the Historical Association*, Vol. XCXI (2014), 44

period.[153] In part, this was a result of immediate family connections. Strachey had the example of his father, a man of imperial conquest and scientific endeavour. Virginia and Vanessa's father was the primary editor of the immense Dictionary of National Biography, which was an 'invaluable reference work' for multiple members of the Group: it occupied a central place in Virginia Woolf's study.[154] The past generation was a common theme in Strachey's correspondence with friends likes Virginia Woolf, at times judged as 'a set of mouthing bungling hypocrites', and at others enjoyed for their idiosyncrasies, with Strachey laughing 'what a crew they were' in a letter to his brother.[155] Some went further than Strachey, actively castigating the Victorian age and seeing themselves as its direct opponents. For example, Wyndham Lewis provocatively declared 'BLAST years 1837-1900,' while Leonard Woolf wrote at the end of his life that 'we found ourselves living in the springtime of a conscious revolt against the social, political, religious, moral, intellectual and artistic institutions, beliefs and standards of our fathers and grandfathers.'[156] Strachey's more delicate presentation of the Victorian period was more at home with Virginia Woolf, who in works like Orlando provides a rapturous vision of the images of the Victorian period: 'crystal palaces, bassinettes, military helmets, memorial wreaths, trousers, whiskers, wedding cakes, cannon, Christmas trees, telescopes, extinct monsters, globes, maps, elephants, and mathematical instruments.'[157] This close relationship with actual eminent Victorians and fixation on the system they had been left meant that Strachey was not the only member to write Victorian caricatures. E.M. Forster's '*Howards End*' can be seen as a meditation on the relationship between Victorians and Edwardians. The novel revolves around the intertwined fates of the capitalist, elder Wilcoxes and the intellectual, younger Schlegels. The patriarchal head 'Mr Wilcox' epitomises much of Bloomsbury's Victorian stereotype: he is a 'man of business', of the 'outer life' who oversees a colonial rubber company and manages the death of his wife in the following

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[153] Katherine Mullin, 'Victorian Bloomsbury', in Victoria Rosner (ed.), '*The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*' (Cambridge, UK., 2014), 19

[154] Ibid., 24

[155] Avery, 'The Historian of the Future', 844; Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 379

[156] Leonard Woolf, '*Sowing: An Autobiography of the Years 1880-1904*' (London, 1964), 137; Wyndham Lewis, 'Manifesto', *Blast*, Vol. I (1914), 18

[157] Virginia Woolf, '*Orlando*' (Oxford, 1992), 222

way: he 'considered [her will] item by item, the emotional content was minimised, and all went forward smoothly.'[158] Despite an affair, Wilcox prompts his new wife, one of the Schlegels, to 'play the girl, until he could rebuild his fortress and hide his soul from the world.'[159] In another case, the Bloomsbury Group carried their scepticism of Victorian Britain out into the public. In the 1910 'Dreadnought Hoax', Virginia Woolf, Duncan Grant and four other friends dressed up in suitable exotic clothing and received a tour of the newly-built HMS Dreadnought under the pretence of being Ethiopian nobles, raising no suspicion as they spoke excited gibberish. While Marsh argues that the participants merely saw their actions as 'a lark and a thrill', the prank became a symbol of tweaked authority, exposing the ignorance of British military leadership.[160] De Courcy argues that 'the hoax's symbolic assault cannot be easily overstated': costumes and blackface was enough to fool the leaders of the world's largest navy, then campaigning to receive millions of pounds in extra naval funding.[161] All around him, Strachey's social circle was engaged with their Victorian forefathers, either figuratively in the caricatures they wrote, directly in their declaration of a cultural break with the past, or literally in poking fun at the generation still at the helm of Britain's institutions. Strachey's divergence from typical Edwardian portrays of the Victorians can be seen as a product of his social environment: within the Group, his jibes and humiliations of the previous generation were quite standard.

A crucial element of '*Eminent Victorians*' is Strachey's construction of a Victorian 'other'. His selection of Nineteenth-Century characters and stories allows him to paint a picture of the Victorian Age that emphasises the importance of religion, of hard graft, and of masculine courage, obscuring elements of the past that uneasily fit into this narrative. In doing so, Strachey took a middle path between the wider social commemoration of the Victorians and the critiques of the Bloomsbury Group: avoiding both the valorisation of the former and the rejection of some in the latter.

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[158] E.M. Forster, '*Howards End*' (New York, 1910), 141

[159] Ibid., 297

[160] Moira Marsh, 'Bunga-bunga on the Dreadnought: hoax, race and Woolf', *Comedy Studies*, Vol. IX (2018), 206

[161] Elisa de Courcy, 'The Dreadnought Hoax portrait as an affront to the Edwardian Age', *Popular Visual Culture*, Vol. XV (2017), 417

4. Exposing the Victorians

Having considered how Strachey constructed the Victorian Age, the thesis now turns to his assessment of the period. Strachey was broadly favourable in his presentation of his predecessors, adopting much of the language and style of the Victorian biographers he claimed to part ways with. However, he clearly singles out the British state and its members for criticism, a product both of a literary tradition of attacking ineffective British 'officialism' and of the immediate context of Strachey's anger at Britain's wartime government. Secondly, the chapter shows that Strachey used camp language to undermine the masculine image and roles of his Victorian subjects, leaving them stripped of their moral authority.

4.1. Positive Presentations of the Victorian

Several historians have interpreted '*Eminent Victorians*' as a direct critique of the Victorian Age and its excesses. Altick argues that the work is an 'anti-Victorian reaction' that amounts to a 'covert attack on [Strachey's] own family' of imperial elites.[162] Mullin judges that Strachey presents Victoria's reign as 'an age of barbarism.'[163] These descriptions omit the fact that '*Victorians*' is full of direct and indirect praise for the Victorian period and its leaders. Strachey's treatment of Gladstone offers a clear case. Though Strachey cannot ignore the four-time Prime Minister's faults, such as his 'uncritical' views on religion, his 'simple-minded' egoism and his wholly lacking 'sense of humour,' he also cannot deny that 'it was easy to worship' Gladstone, recognising that his 'whole life had been devoted to the application of high principles to affairs of State.'[164] Nightingale is also treated sympathetically. Her clear-sighted planning, energetic devotion to the task at hand and insistence on good behaviour clearly help those around her: 'a passionate idolatry spread among the men—they kissed her shadow as it passed… 'Before she came,' said

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[162] Altick, 'Eminent Victorianism', 85

[163] Mullin, 'Victorian Bloomsbury', in Rosner (ed.), '*The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*', 29

[164] Strachey, '*Eminent Victorians*', 88

a soldier, 'there was cussin' and swearin' but after that it was as 'oly as a church.'[165] Furthermore, Strachey's broad description of the Victorian Age is far from monotonous criticism. Lytton describes Manning as 'growing up in the very seed-time of modern progress, coming to maturity with the first onrush of Liberalism, and living long enough to witness the victories of Science and Democracy.'[166] Similarly, when Lytton considers the appointment of Dr. Arnold to the leadership of Rugby School, he contrasts the fading generation of the old aristocracy with the growing desire for reform, writing 'it became necessary for the twelve trustees, noblemen and gentlemen of Warwickshire, to appoint a successor... reform was in the air—political, social, religious; there was even a feeling abroad that our great public schools were not quite all that they should be.'[167] In these excerpts, '*Victorians*' reads much like the conventional 'Whig' histories which Strachey purported to be leaving behind: Macaulay's argument that 'history of England is the history of Progress' echoes in Strachey's book.[168] '*Victorians*' is not a simple whack-job of Nineteenth-Century Britain. However, it does contain plenty of criticism.

4.2. Critiquing the British State and Government

'*Eminent Victorians*' has been rightly praised for the 'sheer joy' of its prose and the playful, irreverent atmosphere it creates.[169] One theme in the book strikes a very different tone. Strachey is forthcoming and unsparing in his criticism of the British state. When the government appears, it normally makes a mess. From the judgement that 'the whole organisation of the war machine was incompetent and out of date' during the Crimean War to the presentation of Civil Servant Evelyn Baring as focussed solely on ensuring that 'he was to emerge from it with credit' during the Sudan Crisis, few governing figures and institutions escape Eminent Victorians with their reputation intact.[170] In the second chapter of the book, they directly appear as the

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[165] Ibid., 47

[166] Ibid., 7

[167] Ibid., 61

[168] Quoted in Schwarz, 'Philosophes of the Conservative Nation', 203

[169] Mullin, 'Victorian Bloomsbury', in Rosner (ed.), '*The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*', 29

[170] Strachey, '*Eminent Victorians*', 44, 90

villains of the story. One officer, who Strachey notes had a head that 'seemed to have been created for butting rather than for anything else', tries to destroy Nightingale and her hospital, hoping to 'starve her into submission.'[171] Writing about General Gordon, Strachey questions the notion of an official career paying off at all. After his victories in China and other imperial postings, all a middle-aged Gordon has to look forward to is to return, 'old and worn out, to a red-brick villa and extinction.'[172] Strachey goes further than critiquing individual officials and their miserly careers, presenting the entire state apparatus as doomed to bungle. He critiques its byzantine quality in passages like 'the proper course was that a representation should be made to the Director-General of the Army Medical Department in London; then the Director-General would apply to the Horse Guards, the Horse Guards would move the Ordnance, the Ordnance would lay the matter before the Treasury, and, if the Treasury gave its consent, the work might be correctly carried through, several months after the necessity for it had disappeared.'[173] At the top of the pyramid of government, we see the British Cabinet send Gordon to his death in sleepy indolence: 'they had found their saviour; that General Gordon was the man—they did not quite know why, but that was of no consequence—the one man to get them out of the whole Sudan difficulty—they did not quite know how, but that was of no consequence either.'[174] The British government and state is treated unambiguously as a villain in '*Eminent Victorians.*'

Strachey's critique of the British state and its officials has two roots. Firstly, the importance of the wartime context cannot be ignored. Strachey's contemporaries argued that the book was written to discredit the wartime government, with David Garnett writing that 'Lytton's essays were designed to undermine the foundations on which the age that brought war had been built.'[175] This has also been recognised by historians: Avery argues that the book can be read as 'a takedown of the pernicious and hardly heroic, blessed, or merciful worldview that in Strachey's opinion had materialised itself in the unprecedented carnage of the Great War'.[176] These

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[171] Ibid., 50

[172] Ibid., 82

[173] Ibid., 46

[174] Ibid., 84

[175] David Garnett, '*Familiar Faces*' (London, 1962), 165

[176] Avery, 'This intricate commerce of souls', 186

judgements are strengthened by ample evidence of Lytton's disgust at the war and Britain's involvement in it. Strachey's wartime letters are rife with condemnation of the leaders of the United Kingdom as 'beasts', while around him his social circle only inflamed these views further, with Garnett writing that his wartime experiences filled him with 'contempt and hatred for all systems of government.'[177] In one wartime article, Strachey described militarism as a 'moonshine' that the government was forcing upon Britain's population.[178] Secondly, '*Eminent Victorians*' anti-establishment critiques can be seen as part of a tradition of discrediting the British state. Goodlad has pointed to the cultural prevalence of a negative 'English officialism' in the Nineteenth Century, with plenty of writers scoffing at the ineptitude of British civil servants and their work.[179] The sense of official ineptitude is a common theme throughout Victorian writing. For example, Banerjee notes that Charles Dickens' '*Little Dorrit*' (1857) provided an 'emblematic' critique of bureaucracy in the 'circumlocution office', a government body which specialises in finding out 'how not to do it', whatever 'it' may be.[180] In another case, Samuel Smiles' 'Self-Help' interrupts its provision of practical steps for personal moral improvement to contrast the 'debacle of the Indian Mutiny' as a result of 'officialism' with the 'self-reliance of the national character' which ensured the Raj would prevail.[181] Further, a sense of condemnable officialism was more than a literary trope. Crises such as the failure to care for the wounded during the Crimean War were real: nearly 20,000 British soldiers died from wounds and disease during the war, over 20% of the total force sent to the Black Sea.[182] Heffer notes that a combination of low salaries, glacial career progression and a lack of social prestige made life in the mid-Victorian civil service one of tedium and stagnation, with most of its members 'bored and depressed' soon

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[177] Quoted in Atkin, '*A War of Individuals'*, 30

[178] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 405

[179] Lauren Goodlad, ''A Middle Class Cut into Two': Historiography and Victorian National Character', *English Literary History*, Vol. LXVII (2000), 149

[180] Sukanya Banerjee, 'Writing Bureaucracy, Bureaucracy Writing: Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit, and Mid-Victorian Liberalism', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. LXXV (2020), 133; Charles Dickens, '*Little Dorrit*' (Oxford, 1979), 100

[181] Goodlad, 'A Middle Class Cut into Two', 150

[182] Lynn MacDonald, 'Florence Nightingale, statistics and the Crimean War', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Vol. CLXXVII (2014), 575

after joining.[183] Strachey's critique of Victorian officialdom is both a response to the failure he saw around him and as the continuation of a long tradition of denigrating the British civil service and alighting on its many blunders.

4.3. Queering and the Camp Style

Strachey's most effective critiques on the Victorian Age are achieved through the use of the Camp style. Camp is defined by Kleinhans as 'an ironic and parodic appreciation of an extravagant form that is out of proposition to its content.'[184] Similarly, Sontag observes that Camp art and writing can be identified by the use of 'flamboyant mannerisms susceptible of a double interpretation' and, in its 'pure form', as a 'seriousness that fails.'[185] Janes has noted Strachey's use of this style, finding that his work 'queered' the leaders and institutions of Victorian Britain by suggesting the 'unusual and subversive gender roles and sexual preferences' present in these cases.[186] Janes does not note the relevance of the Camp style: but Lytton's use of this style is key to the 'queering' effect of '*Victorians*' and goes beyond the subversion of gender roles, permeating much of the book's presentation of the Victorian Age. Throughout the book, Strachey combines extravagant phrasing with mocking parody to describe key moments in his stories. For example, the exit of future Cardinal John Henry Newman from Oxford is described as such: 'the University breathed such a sigh of relief as usually follows the difficult expulsion of a hard piece of matter from a living organism.'[187] In another case, Strachey pokes fun at a description of Dr. Arnold as a man of 'unhasting, unresting diligence' by following it up with the comment that 'Mrs. Arnold, too, no doubt agreed with Carlyle. During the first eight years of their married life, she bore him six children; and four more were to follow.'[188] The use of double interpretations is also evident throughout the book, as in Strachey's hinting at the

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[183] Heffer, '*High Minds*', 479

[184] Chuck Kleinhans, 'Taking out the Trash: Camp and the politics of parody', in Moe Meyer, '*The Politics and Poetics of Camp*' (London, 1994), 160

[185] Sontag, 'Notes on Camp', accessed via https://monstrousculture.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/sontag_camp.pdf

[186] Janes, 'Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness', 20

[187] Strachey, '*Eminent Victorians*', 37

[188] Ibid., 54

possibility of Gordon's homosexuality. Lytton writes that 'the presence of ladies-especially of fashionable ladies- filled him with uneasiness,' while by contrast 'he was particularly fond of boys,' taking multiple paupers under his wing, who 'visited him in the evenings for lessons and advice.'[189] One passage describes the earnestness with which Dr Arnold's parents attempted to educate their son, with Strachey noting that the constant encouragement created the 'possibility that young Thomas might grow up into a prig.'[190] Elsewhere in the book, Strachey delights in leaping upon the moral seriousness of the Victorian period and showing its futility and vacuousness. In one description of Nightingale, Strachey sets her virtues directly against the callousness they rest upon: 'The benevolence and public spirit of that long life had only been equalled by its acerbity. Her virtue had dwelt in hardness, and she had poured forth her unstinted usefulness with a bitter smile upon her lips.'[191] Despite the sacrifice of Gordon at Khartoum, Strachey only considers his death and significance with a few throwaway lines: 'At any rate, it had all ended very happily—in a glorious slaughter of 20,000 Arabs, a vast addition to the British Empire, and a step in the Peerage for Sir Evelyn Baring.'[192] Throughout '*Eminent Victorians*', Strachey uses a camp, ironic style to describe everything from his characters' sexualities to religious history.

Strachey's use of the camp punctures the ideal of Victorian masculinity closely associated with his chosen characters. Anderson notes British soldiers were raised as moral ideals both for their martial strength and religious devotion from the Crimean War onwards, a programme of 'christian militarism' that remained very popular in the early years of the Edwardian period.[193] General Gordon offered a prime example of this ideal, seen in the hyperbolic inscription of his effigy, installed in London's St. Paul's Cathedral after Khartoum: 'he saved an Empire by his warlike genius, he ruled vast provinces with justice, wisdom and power… Obedient to his Sovereign's Command, he died in the heroic attempt to save men, women and children from deadly peril.'[194] Strachey uses 'camp' writing to puncture this code of behaviour and set of

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[189] Ibid., 75

[190] Ibid., 61

[191] Ibid., 58

[192] Ibid., 99

[193] Anderson, 'The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', 46

[194] Quoted in Avery, 'This intricate commerce of souls', 185

assumptions in three ways. Firstly, his irreverent writing presents clearly the limitations of physical effort and courage. This is clear in the essay on Nightingale. Despite the fortitude and energy of Nightingale in her youth, Strachey makes it clear that her efforts to work and improve the world around her are ultimately futile. As she grows old, her vigour is sapped: 'She was not to die as she had lived. The sting was to be taken out of her; she was to be made soft; she was to be reduced to compliance and complacency.'[195] In Strachey's account, old age comes as a reminder of human limits. Even Nightingale, once capable of titanic efforts, is beaten. Secondly, Strachey's description of imperial conquests with 'a seriousness that fails' calls into question the fruits of christian militarism. That Gordon's loyalty and willingness to serve ends up with him becoming 'the agent of a policy which was exactly the reverse of his own', and dying in his attempt to implement it, leaves the reader with a sense of the silliness of unquestioningly following the call to arms, exercising strength and courage without reflecting on why.[196] Third, Strachey's use of the camp allows him to consider aspects of his characters that lie behind the facade of devotion to duty and carrying out imperial missions. His avowed focus on the 'psychological problems suggested by [the] inner history' of his subjects represented a way to sidestep feats of courage and victories to look at new aspects of his Eminent Victorians. [197] This became particularly subversive when he turned to aspects of 'inner history' that directly contradicted the outer. As Holroyd notes, the Victorian criminalisation of same-sex relationships made it difficult for homosexuals 'not to see [themselves] as… an enemy of your country.'[198] This places Gordon in a very uncomfortable position: on one side, the imperial hero, on the other, a potential sexual deviant in a society that placed homosexuality firmly out of the bounds of respectability. Strachey's ability to coherently describe both sides is key to the potency of '*Eminent Victorians*'.

Strachey's assessment of the Victorian Age is multifaceted. He recognises many aspects of the period that are worthy of praise, from the successful reform of antiquated customs to the idealism of leaders like W.E. Gladstone. However, he is directly critical of the British state and government throughout the book, a product of

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[195] Ibid., 58

[196] Ibid., 84

[197] Strachey, '*Eminent Victorians*', 3

[198] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 236

the immediate wartime context and broader tropes of administrative ineptitude in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Britain. Finally, his use of the camp style to puncture and look beyond Victorian codes of masculinity allows him to paint eminent members of the previous generation in new lights, casting doubt onto their achievements and the extent to which Victorian stereotypes accurately depict them.

5. The success of Eminent Victorians

This chapter considers the impact of '*Eminent Victorians*', considering the successes of the book in the aftermath of its release, both among the Strachey's social circle and more widely in British society. The chapter then explores the specific nature of the contribution '*Victorians*' made to British culture in the late 1910s before examining the broader factors that facilitated the book's success, exploring both the social changes that took place in wartime Britain and the specific role of Strachey.

5.1. The Reception of Eminent Victorians

'*Eminent Victorians*' was a hit in the Bloomsbury Group. As Atkin notes, from its publication onwards Strachey's 'literary star was in the ascendant.'[199] His friends and contacts loved the charming prose and the book's provocative undertone. Still-imprisoned Bertrand Russell wrote that 'it is brilliant, delicious, exquisitely civilised... I often laughed out loud in my cell while I was reading the book. The warder came to my cell to remind me that prison was a place of punishment.'[200] In another memoir, Demond MacCarthy remembers his admiration for the 'careful curiosity… perspicuous serenity' and 'moral passion' of the book.[201] Leonard Woolf described the work as a wonderful combination of 'intellectual maturity' and the 'fiery and violent intransigence of youth.'[202] Virginia Woolf celebrated the effect of 'little words that poison vast monsters of falsehood.'[203] As other members of the group looked to their own work, they found themselves employing the techniques Strachey had used in '*Victorians*', with Annan describing J.M. Keynes' '*The Economic Consequences of the Peace*' as 'a polemic… [that] matched the polemic which Strachey had published in 1918.'[204] This all came as a pleasant surprise to Strachey, who wrote to Ottoline Morrell in June that 'I'm getting rather nervous- the reviewers are so extraordinarily

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[199] Atkin, '*A War of Individuals*', 29

[200] Russell, '*Autobiography*', 73

[201] Quoted in Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*', 263

[202] Quoted in Ibid., 256

[203] Quoted in Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 499

[204] Noel Annan, 'Keynes and the Bloomsbury Group', *Biography*, Vol. XXII (1999), 25

gushing that I think something must be wrong.'[205] Fortunately for his nerves, Lytton received a healthy dose of criticism over the summer of 1918. His detractors accused Strachey of mischaracterizing his victims, whether regarding their general personalities or small details like whether Gordon had preferred sherry or brandy and soda while out on campaign. Plenty of surviving Victorian icons hated the book. Imperialist poet Rudyard Kipling described it as 'downright wicked.'[206] Kipling's distaste is understandable, given the poet's 'strong sense' that 'men and women live in separate spheres and should abide by different laws.'[207] These critiques were more than compensated by the new connections who reached out to Strachey, such as the family of Herbert Asquith, Prime Minister from 1908 to 1916.[208] Lytton was now so sought after that he found little time for his friends: Virginia Woolf wrote in April 1919 that 'it is now so long since I have seen Lytton that I take my impressions of him from his writing.'[209] Invited to the summit of Britain's social hierarchy, Strachey could look around his social circle with confidence that his book had been a success.

Strachey could also cast his eyes to the book's wider reception with some satisfaction. '*Eminent Victorians*' sold rapidly. All print runs of the book were exhausted in the two years that followed its initial publication. At a time in which 5,000 sales counted as a major success, 90,000 copies would sell over Strachey's lifetime in Britain and the United States.[210] As Holyroyd notes, the book was 'translated into French, Polish, Romanian, Spanish, Italian and Japanese.'[211] Branson sees the work as having sparked a 'trend' of 'irreverent, novelistic, and short' biographies.[212] The example of '*Victorians*' was followed by other writers across the United Kingdom and America, with a crop of 'debunkers' following up with their own acerbic studies on famous Victorians, becoming so commonplace that Altick argues

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[205] Quoted in Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 492

[206] Quoted in Ibid., 501

[207] Kaori Nagai, 'Kipling and Gender', in Howard Booth, '*The Cambridge Companion to Rudyard Kipling*' (Cambridge, UK., 2011), 66

[208] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 505

[209] Ibid., 527

[210] Guy Arnold, '*Held Fast for England: G.A. Henty, Imperialist Boys Writer*' (Cedar Grove, 1980), xiv

[211] Quoted in Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 498

[212] Scott Branson, 'Planned Obsolescence, or The Fate of Prose in Lytton Strachey's Biographies', *GLQ*, Vol. XXIII (2017), 536

Thomas Hardy, 'the last surviving Eminent Victorian', ghostwrote his own posthumous biography to try and avoid being the target of a salacious book after passing away.[213] Discussion of '*Victorians*' would continue for the rest of Lytton's life: Leonard notes that even in the early 1930s critics asked 'what right Lytton Strachey had to criticise General Gordon - Lytton Strachey who had never been in the East, had never been out in the sun without an umbrella, had never been far from a cup of tea or glass of lemonade.'[214] Readers of the work later remembered its release clearly, with one soldier recounting 'I remember very vividly my first sight of it… I must examine this old bore, I said.'[215] All around the country, the arrival of the book was quickly accompanied by an explosion of praise and a request for more copies. '*Eminent Victorians*' was a hit.

5.2. Sources of Success

'*Eminent Victorians*' was successful for multiple reasons. Strachey's status certainly did not hurt its chances. By 1918, he had been a fixture of elite circles in the United Kingdom for nearly two decades, firstly as the Apostle who became 'a dominating influence upon the intellectuals of his generation' at Cambridge, and secondly as a core member of the Bloomsbury Group, whose members flirted and fraternised with Prime Ministers and their families.[216] Few other writers could hope for recommendations from wartime leaders: Lytton received a 'noble and high-flown puff' from Herbert Asquith in Summer 1918, the eminent politician recommending his book from the pulpit while giving a lecture series in Oxford.[217] Strachey's writing style was another asset. Unlike modernist writers like T.S. Eliot and D.H. Lawrence, who emerged around the end of the First World War, Strachey wrote within the bounds he had learned as a student and loved as a writer, and policed as a critic. Avery's judgement that '*Victorians*' 'shattered… convention' is an overstatement, at least

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[213] Altick, 'Eminent Victorianism: what Lytton Strachey hath wrought', 83

[214] Quoted in Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*', 258

[215] Quoted in Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 481

[216] Leonard Woolf, quoted in Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*', 256

[217] Quoted in Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 496

stylistically.[218] With his classical allusions and jolly reminders of the progress that had been made over the last century, Strachey's book was accessible and familiar to general readers across the United Kingdom. By contrast, when J.C. Squire first read Eliot's '*The Wasteland*', he dismissed it as incomprehensible, sniffing that 'a grunt would serve equally well'.[219] In his person and in his writing style, Strachey was ideally placed to release a bestseller in 1918.

Lytton's sensitive balance between critiquing the past and appreciating it also bolstered the work's chance of success. Despite Vernon's claim that 'the culmination of the Great War seemed at last to have brought down the final curtain on the Victorian age', plenty of people in Britain were not eager to leave the past behind in the wake of the fighting.[220] Plenty of those around Strachey recognised the continuities between the Victorian years and their own time, with Forster describing himself as a member of the 'fag-end of Victorian liberalism.'[221] Many sought solace in continuity with the past. At the end of the war, continuing the mantle of pre-war culture was preferable to alternatives the war had created. The Russian Revolution had inflamed fears of left-wing extremism, with British politicians declaring Bolshevism a 'world force' and looking with worry at British conferences held in support of the Russian radicals, such as the 1917 Leeds Convention.[222] As Lawrence notes, 'Britain after the First World War was a nation haunted by the fear that violence had slipped its chains—by the fear that the ex-servicemen, the general public, the state, or perhaps all three, had been irrevocably "brutalised" by the mass carnage of four and a half years of war'.[223] As such, appeals to the past and to continuity with the pre-war years could be very successful: though the electorate had just been tripled, Cawood notes that the 'backwards-looking rural vision of a lost Eden' offered by Stanley Baldwin's

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[218] Avery, 'This intricate commerce of souls', 186

[219] Quoted in Jason Harding, 'Modernist Poetry and the Canon', in Alex Davis & Lee Jenkins, '*The Cambridge Companion to Modernist Poetry*' (Cambridge, UK., 2007), 228

[220] Vernon, 'Historians and the Victorian Studies Question', 273

[221] Quoted in Mullin, 'Victorian Bloomsbury', in Rosner (ed.), '*The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group*', 29

[222] Jonathan Haslam, '*The Spectre of War: International Communism and the Origins of World War II*' (Princeton, 2021), 19

[223] Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalisation in Post-First World War Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. LXXV (2003), 557

conservative resulted in continued electoral success from 1918 onwards.[224] The undeniably bourgeois character of Strachey and his writing helped sceptical onlookers accept his book and the provocations it contained. Strachey's clear appreciation for the Victorian period played well to the large constituency of British people in the 'throes of jubilation' in the knowledge that the war was over and the hope that life might return to normal.[225]

On the flipside, Strachey's targets in '*Eminent Victorians*' were ripe for exposure in late Spring 1918. Religious and patriotic fervour had been discredited over the course of the First World War. Holroyd notes that the critical presentation of Christianity in 1918 landed well with a generation 'sickened by the chauvinism of clergymen assuring them that God had been in the trenches on their side,' a judgement supported by recollections from British soldiers that emphasised the unpleasantness of religious intervention into military life, as in one soldier's declaration that 'the church parade has been on of the unpleasant parts of this enforced military life.'[226] British religious institutions had taken part in efforts to stir up militaristic fervour: one Welsh religious committee had sent 438 letters to regional clergy by 1915 'requesting that a patriotic sermon be preached,' though dozens of these requests were turned down.[227] These efforts did not endear them to the soldiers who followed their directions to the trenches, or the families who saw their sons directed to war. Further, Strachey's irreverent treatment of patriotic tropes offered a respite from the moral seriousness of wartime propaganda. As Gregory notes, 'explicitly patriotic rhetoric was treated with suspicion, not because it was untrue, but rather because it was unnecessary.'[228] For many, especially those in the armed forces, their wartime experiences had demonstrated their willingness to serve their country when required: they had enough of patronising reminders of their need to. There was also a large constituency of people on the Home Front already hostile to patriotic intensity. As the war progressed peace-

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[224] Ian Cawood, 'Life after Joe: Politics and War in the West Midlands, 1914-1918', *Midland History*, Vol. XLII (2017), 106

[225] Gregory, *'The Last Great War'*, 251

[226] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 496; Quoted in Michael Snape, 'God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars' (Abingdon, 2005), 157

[227] Gregory, *'The Last Great War'*, 88

[228] Ibid., 268

seeking organisations like the 'Union of Democratic Control' gained substantial popular support.[229] By 1917, the UDC had gained sufficient traction to see its aims adopted as the foreign policy of a faction of Liberal MPs and to find a rival in the National War Aims Committee, which Millman argues was a treasury-funded alternative 'obviously intended to be an antidote' to the threat posed by an influential civil organisation advocating peace.[230] Across British society, the experience of war had done much to discredit the chauvinist patriotism of the Edwardian period and the religious institutions who supported militarism from the altar. As such, '*Victorians*' fell on receptive ears.

The subtle critiques Strachey offered of Victorian masculinity also reflected social change that the war had created. At the start of the war, plenty of British soldiers had drawn upon Victorian tropes of masculine conduct as they looked to ordeal ahead. Reflecting the Victorian revival of mediaeval codes of chivalry noted by Girouard, one soldier explained in a homebound letter that he saw himself as 'taking part in the old French wars, the days of knighthood and chivalry when lance met lance and sword met sword.'[231] Other soldiers directly linked their service to what they considered their duty as men. One Captain, writing back to his mother and recounting the feeling of being subjected to shellfire, wrote that 'I was horribly afraid… but thank God I did not show any funk. That's all a man dare ask.'[232] The poet Robert Graves reflected that 'France is the only place for a gentleman now.'[233] Fletcher notes that these stoic attitudes were deeply challenged by the experience of fighting. He argues that 'manhood, after this scale of loss, could never again be simply an external code of behaviour which could cope with anything.'[234] Fletcher's argument is supported by Showalter, who argues that the acceptance of shell shock as a medical condition rather

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[229] Martin Caedel, 'Pacifism', in Hew Strachan (ed.), '*The British Home Front and the First World War*' (Cambridge, UK., 2023), 512, 517

[230] Ibid., 519; Brock Millman, '*Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*' (London, 2000), 229

[231] Mark Girouard, '*The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*' (London, 1981); J. Mackenzie, '*The Children of the Souls: A Tragedy of the First World War*' (London, 1986), 150

[232] Quoted in Fletcher, 'Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of Victorian Manliness', 47

[233] Quoted in Pennell, '*A Kingdom United*', 156

[234] Fletcher, 'Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of Victorian Manliness', 58

than a failure of nerves marks a 'refusal to continue the bluff of stoic male behaviour.'[235] It is also backed up by testimonies from the front line, as in one soldier's note in his diary that 'war teaches men how little man can rub along.'[236] Given these harrowing experiences, it was harder to dismiss Strachey's scepticism at the sufficiency of Victorian manliness as a lens with which to understand famous figures in British society, particularly once soldiers returned home.

'*Eminent Victorians*' was one of the most successful books of the late 1910s, bringing fame and wealth to Strachey and cementing his reputation as a leading writer. Multiple factors underlie its success. Strachey's elite status and his able use of conventional writing ensured the book would be circulated and enjoyed by enough influential people to cause a splash in Britain's literary world. More fundamentally, his work matched up exceptionally well with the cultural changes that the war had brought, from disillusionment with ruthless masculinity to distaste with the radical alternatives the postwar world seemed to offer.

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[235] Elaine Showalter, '*The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830– 1980*' (London, 1987), 172

[236] Quoted in J. Meyer, '*Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*' (Basingstoke, 2009), 61

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the thesis offers parting thoughts on the story of '*Eminent Victorians*' and the book's importance in British History and wider scholarship. It first outlines Lytton Strachey's life after 1918, then turns to considering the significance of the book as a reflection of changing conceptions of postwar British identity. It argues that '*Victorians*' helped British readers to adapt their understanding of masculinity, patriotism and psychology in the postwar period. Finally, the thesis considers what lessons the case of Strachey's book offers for contemporary understanding of the First World War and the early Twentieth Century in Britain.

6.1. Strachey after 1918

The publication of '*Eminent Victorians*' shaped the rest of Strachey's life. He was now a rich man and a famous writer. This reputation allowed Lytton to continue writing works of 'new biography', including 1921's '*Queen Victoria*', 1928's '*Elizabeth and Essex: A Tragic History*' and 1931's '*Portraits in Miniature.*' He stuck to the form that he had innovated: short, irreverent pieces of witty prose that brought historical figures down from their ivory towers. He lived in a triangular relationship with Dora Carrington and Ralph Partridge, moving with them to a village near Marlborough in 1924, where Strachey would live out the rest of his life. Writing retrospectively, Leonard Woolf remembered Lytton in this period as an 'extremely mellow and gentle' figure, caring for those around him and living quietly, his days as a provocateur now behind him.[237] Reflecting upon his character and his work, Strachey presents us with a life we should celebrate. Peevish judgements that his writing is 'almost unreadable' and that he 'manipulated his readers' miss his subtle complexity, from his dedication to testify to 'the fundamental goodness of friendship and of intimacy between persons in general' to his efforts 'relentlessly critiquing the social and political structures that hampered friendship's fruition,' Strachey's work was almost unparalleled in its ability to reflect changing conceptions of British identity in

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[237] Leonard Woolf, in Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*', 256

the early Twentieth Century.[238] He may have done so with tongue in cheek, but that does not leave his work a laughing matter. Strachey died young, aged 51. Despite a 'family tradition of longevity', stomach cancer weakened him in the late 1920s, with the writer passing away in early 1932.[239] His last words were reputed to be 'if this is dying, then I don't think much of it.'[240] He was survived by the majority of his Bloomsbury Groups comrades, MacCarthy judging that 'it is likely we have been robbed of his finest book.'[241] Strachey was also survived by the rest of his clan: the family name is carried forward today. Stracheys have served as Members of the European Parliament, as senior members of Clement Atlee's Labour Party, as godchildren to Queen Elizabeth II, and can lay a decent claim to having developed the first video game.[242]

6.2. Eminent Victorians and British Identity

Responsibility for the success of 'Eminent Victorians' could be allocated in different ways. It could be argued that Strachey, with his long history of refusing to abide by the social rules of the United Kingdom and his distinctive position at the apex of British literary society, acted as a vanguard, and that without him, there would have been nothing like 'Eminent Victorians'. It could also be argued that Strachey himself was inconsequential, and the hype and fame which his book achieved was the result of the 'dominant' mood of 'disillusion' brought by the carnage and deprivation of the First World War': without Lytton, someone else would have taken his place.[243] The answer lies in between. The case of 'Victorians' and its success was a product of a fruitful relationship between Strachey and wider social forces. Take the matter of homosexuality and the suggestion of its social presence in 'Eminent Victorians.' Strachey's ability to publish a work which hinted at the 'queerness' of leading

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[238] Altick, 'Eminent Victorianism', 84; Avery, 'This intricate commerce of souls', 200

[239] Caine, 'From Bombay to Bloomsbury', 386

[240] L.W. Rutledge, 'The Gay Fireside Companion' (Alyson, 1989), 181

[241] Desmond MacCarthy, quoted in Rosenbaum, 'The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary', 266

[242] C.S. Strachey, 'Logical or non-mathematical programmes', Proceedings of the 1952 ACM National Meeting (Toronto, 1952), 47

[243] Barbara Tuchman, 'August 1914: The Guns of August' (New York, 1963), 440

Victorians may have been impossible a generation earlier. Bristow notes that the 'taboo against sexual intimacy between men intensified greatly' during the 1890s.[244] Though writers produced work in this time that hinted at the possibility and desirability of male love, they felt they had to do so behind closed doors, as in the case of J.A. Symonds, whose 1891 work '*A Problem of Male Ethics*', which advocated the 'genuine emotion' of homosexual love, had to be circulated privately.[245] Strachey's sexuality and provocative suggestions were accepted to a much greater extent than predecessors such as Oscar Wilde, who was imprisoned and ruined by the public exposure of his homosexuality. Social shifts allowed for a work like '*Victorians*' to become successful. However, this does not leave the author inconsequential. Strachey's fineness of expression, his ability to hint and suggest without exposing himself too clearly and his understanding of what cultural lines could not be crossed allowed him to hint at sexual diversity in a society that still criminalised romantic male relationships. Even in the 1960s, as Holroyd started the research for his biography, the danger of having ones' sexual proclivities made public was a major fear for Bloomsbury Group members: he recalls one surviving member asking 'shall I be arrested?' after reading his manuscript.[246] Strachey's book was the product both of shifting social tides and the specific skills and approach of the author: the work is best understood as a product of both factors working in tandem.

Released in the closing stages of a long and bloody war, '*Eminent Victorians*' reflected the shifting notions of British identity that emerged in the Edwardian period and catalysed during the years of fighting. Critics and contemporaries writing in the interwar period recognised this aspect of Strachey's book, commonly describing the work as representing a new chapter in British History. Desmond MacCarthy noted that the book 'both focused and intensified our consciousness of the differences between nineteenth and twentieth century modes of thinking and feeling.'[247] One critic, writing in the wake of Strachey's death, described 'Victorians' as 'the first book of the

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[244] Joseph Bristow, "Fratrum Societati: Forster's Apostolic Dedications," in Robert K. Martin & George Piggford (eds.), '*Queer Forster*' (Chicago, 1997), 115

[245] Colin Tyler, 'J.A. Symonds, Socialism and the Crisis of Sexuality in fin-de-siecle Britain', *History of European Ideas*, Vol. XLIII (2017), 1002

[246] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 17

[247] Desmond MacCarthy, quoted in Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*', 266

Twenties… a revolutionary text-book on bourgeois society.'[248] Virginia Woolf ranked Strachey alongside James Joyce in 1924's 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown', judging her friend and his work as 'representatives of the new… approach to character.'[249] The sense that '*Victorians*' reflected a break with the past is shared by historians. Holroyd, Strachey's great biographer, saw the work as destroying the pretensions of previous generations: 'Robbed of their awful surroundings in the depths, they no longer appear the formidable creatures of sea-legend.'[250] Janes argues that the book 'played a crucial role in the questioning of the nature of the achievement of Victorian Britain as a whole', while Avery judges that Strachey's work successfully challenged Buryan scientism and… the moralising tendencies in Victorian historiography.'[251] As both historians and contemporaries note, '*Eminent Victorians*' was one of the first books published in the United Kingdom to express a clear sense of difference with and separation from the Victorians.

'*Eminent Victorians*' offered a fresh lens for gazing back at the past. It offered readers the sense that they were different from their forefathers, which contrasted with much previous work in the biographical tradition and chimed with shifting notions of who Britons should aim to be. From the Nineteenth Century itself, when disparate generations were first brought together under the term 'Victorian', to the Edwardian years, when the reign of the last Queen was held up as a moral example for its successors to follow, the sense predominated that Britons should seek to emulate and identify themselves with the Victorian generations.[252] Strachey was in the vanguard of the cultural challenge to this sense, questioning his ancestors moral worthiness and ridiculing their claims to greatness. Strachey lays out in the book's preface his goal of writing a biography that maintained the author's 'freedom of spirit.'[253] Refusing to praise the Victorians was his way of doing so. In his refusal, Strachey could start to subtly offer views and ways of thinking that represented himself and his generation.

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[248] Quoted in Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 496

[249] Quoted in Pionke, ''Cardinal Manning' and the Redisciplining of Biography', 87

[250] Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*', 491

[251] Janes, 'Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness and John Maynard Keynes' The Economic Consequences of the Peace', 21; Avery, 'The Historian of the Future', 859

[252] Michael Cohen, 'E.C. Stedman and the Invention of Victory Poetry', *Victorian Poetry*, Vol. XLIII (2005); Jones, 'National Hero and Very Queer Fish'

[253] Strachey, '*Eminent Victorians*', iv

He recognised how far apart his life and those of his contemporaries had become from those of the late Nineteenth Century and powerfully showed how these differences had begun to reshape conceptions of British identity.

The primary contribution of '*Eminent Victorians*' to British culture was to help puncture belief in the indomitable, victorious imperial masculinity that became predominant in late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Century Britain. Strachey's discovery of the 'inner history' of his subjects, even if it was based on flimsy scholarship, offered a new way to think about the celebrities of Victorian Britain. Through his stories, he communicated a critique of the pre-war tendency to look at imperial heroes as simple paragons of masculinity and moral fortitude. Bringing emotions and base motives into history could expose feats of courage as ultimately little more than self-serving bullying. Looking at sexuality raised the notion that men could both be British imperial heroes and homosexual. This left readers with a conundrum: either they had too eagerly and too unthinkingly chosen their icons, or they had too eagerly and too unthinkingly condemned homosexuality. Whatever conclusions were drawn, Strachey's efforts to peel back the layers of Victorian heroes and the Victorian age complicated Twentieth-Century attitudes towards the past. From then on, this psychological question and approach was out in the open and would refuse to be placed back into its box. As Victorian notions of masculinity reached their limits during the First World War and confirmed the long-held frustration of many in Britain at the incompetence of their leaders and government, Strachey's book both validated a sense of difference from the past and gave some suggestions for how to move on from the Victorian legacy.

'*Eminent Victorians*' used the past as a cultural other against which the present could be understood. Strachey's delicate treatment of the Victorians demonstrates the complex relationship between different generations, with the intimacy of experience, of shared cultural understanding and of common political, social and economic institutions coming together in the stereotypes of the past he created. In the social sciences, it is common to analyse the construction of identity through differences between the self and the foreign other. While this is an important relationship, it is not the only way in which identity is constructed. As Strachey's work shows, looking at previous generations can encourage nuanced and effective discussion of identity. Whether employed in history or in other disciplines such as political science, the

tendency to consider identity by comparing different generations is a promising and underutilised approach.

6.3. Modern Britain and the Early Twentieth Century

When British people today look back to the early Twentieth Century, the dominant image is the carnage of the First World War. The 'Great War' still grips the British imagination. This has been widely acknowledged by historians, as in Fussell's judgement that 'the whole texture of British daily life could be said to commemorate the war still', from the popularity of egg and chips to pub closing hours.[254] Winter notes that the First World War casts a 'long shadow' over the twentieth century, while Kennan depicts it as the 'great seminal catastrophe' of the modern period.[255] This emphasis is understandable. The First World War was the largest conflict Britain had experienced since the defeat of Napoleon at Battle of Waterloo, and it cost the British Empire over double the casualties of the Second World War. However, looking at '*Eminent Victorians*' shows that the first decades of the Twentieth Century were a much more profoundly transformational period for the United Kingdom than a sole focus on the horror of trench warfare would suggest. Over these years, British people started to question the assumptions of the previous century, from the proud domination of a massive empire to the subordination of all others by a narrow group of wealthy men. Having enjoyed immense economic and military power centuries, the rise of new challengers and the destruction of the War left Britain decidedly less powerful than it had grown accustomed to. Chinks in the armour of stoic Victorian masculinity, exposed during the Edwardian years, were blown open by the First World War. It is in these years that the first hints of a 'modern' or 'post imperial' British identity start to emerge, with a focus on social justice starting to challenge demands for greatness and the celebrations of imperial conquest and domination winding down. As '*Eminent Victorians*' shows, the start of the previous century has much more to offer than war and bloodshed.

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[254] Paul Fussell, '*The Great War and Modern Memory*' (Oxford, 2013), 341

[255] Jay Winter, '*Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*' (New Haven, 2006), 13; G.F. Kennan, '*The Decline of Bismarck's European Order: Franco-Russian Relations 1875-1890*' (Princeton, 1979), 3

Britain never totally abandoned its Victorian legacy of imperial domination and chauvinistic self-belief. The United Kingdom retained significant colonial possessions until the handover of Hong Kong to the People's Republic of China in 1997. Arguably, Britain has continued its imperial tendency of launching wars of choice to spread its values and protect its global influence, attacking Iraq with the United States in 2003, intervening in Libya in 2011 and emerging as one of the world's most outspoken supporters of Ukraine following Russian invasion in 2022. Disgraced former Prime Minister Boris Johnson exemplifies the macho exceptionalism of late Victorian statesmen in his insistence of Britain's ability to 'go it alone' outside of the European Union and in his disastrous attempt to build 'herd immunity' at the outbreak of the Coronavirus Pandemic, letting the virus wash over the United Kingdom. As British people face temptations to give into unthinking national pride, Strachey's sharp writing still offers a useful perspective. His books are deeply interested in the past yet sceptical of domineering attempts to rule oneself and self assuredly go out to improve the world. His sharp wit and keen sense of parody effectively deflate bloated national egos, while his consistent insistence that 'human beings are too important to be treated as mere symptoms of the past' remains useful in an era where 'culture wars' are dragging British history and the lessons it offers into centre stage.[256] Now as then, Strachey offers powerful reflections on British identity.

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[256] Strachey, '*Eminent Victorians*', iv

Annotated Bibliography

Eminent Victorians

Key Works:

- Albert D. Pionke, ''Cardinal Manning' and the Redisciplining of Biography', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. LXI (2018)
- Caitriona Ni Dhuill, 'Biography as Exposure: Lytton Strachey's Eminent Victorians', in Edward Saunders & Wilhelm Hemecker (eds.), '*Biography in Theory'* (Berlin, 2017)
- Dominic Janes, 'Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness and John Maynard Keynes' The Economic Consequences of the Peace (1919)', *Literature and History*, Vol. XXIII (2014)
- Richard Altick, 'Eminent Victorianism: what Lytton Strachey hath wrought', *The American Scholar*, Vol. LXIV (1995)
- Scott Branson, 'Planned Obsolescence, or The Fate of Prose in Lytton Strachey's Biographies', *GLQ*, Vol. XXIII (2017)

This thesis joins a small group of works which consider the development and significance of '*Eminent Victorians*.' Existing scholarship can be roughly divided into works which praise the book's contributions and style, and those that criticise Strachey's approach and impact. Richard Altick hates the book, seeing it as an unprofessional attack on Strachey's own family. As noted earlier in the thesis, this argument often relies upon concocted assumptions, as in the assumption that Lytton was aiming for historical accuracy, or just slander, as in the presentation of the book as an attempt to insult other family members. Branson's critique is more subtle, presenting the work as one of the first books to indulge in 'nonproductive aesthetics': an unwillingness to imbue the work with lessons that would allow it to remain useful for readers after its immediate release.[257] This judgement ignores Strachey's deep interest in G.E. Moore's ethics and the impact of the First World War upon the book, pieces of context that rubbish the argument that Strachey's book was merely meant as a bit of fun, with no serious thought going into its writing. Caitriona Ni Dhuill and Albert Pionke analyse the book primarily as a piece of literature, focussing on its role as a piece of stylistic innovation and as a harbinger of change in the biographical genre, rather than considering its historical context. The most interesting paper specifically

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[257] Scott Branson, 'Planned Obsolescence, or The Fate of Prose in Lytton Strachey's Biographies', *GLQ*, Vol. XXIII (2017), 542

focussed on the book is Janes' 'Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness and John Maynard Keynes.' His article considers the impact of Strachey's work on other thinkers in the Bloomsbury Group: he recognises the influence of '*Victorians*' as a powerful statement of different from the past and demonstrates the importance of the book in Keynes' later work on 1919's '*The Economic Consequences of the Peace*'. Though a useful work for this thesis, particularly in its consideration of the importance of the 'queering' effect of Strachey's writing, Janes' largely focusses on Strachey's immediate contemporaries, whereas this thesis looks beyond to Strachey's wider place in contemporary cultural shifts the United Kingdom.[258] Considered together, existing work on '*Eminent Victorians*' has explored multiple aspects of the book, yet few works have offered an interdisciplinary study, staying within the confines of one particular academic discipline.

Lytton Strachey

Key Works:

- Barbara Caine, '*Bombay to Bloomsbury: A Biography of the Strachey Family*' (Oxford, 2005)
- Charles Richard Sanders, '*Lytton Strachey: His Mind and Art*' (New Haven, 1957)
- Julie Anne Taddeo, '*Lytton Strachey and the Search for Modern Sexual Identity*' (Binghamton, 2002)
- Michael Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*' (London, 1994)
- Paul Levy (ed.), '*The Letters of Lytton Strachey*' (Ann Arbor, 2005)
- Todd Avery, ''The Historian of the Future': Lytton Strachey and modernist historiography between the Two Cultures', *ELH,* Vol. LXXVII (2010)
- Todd Avery, ''This intricate commerce of souls': The Origins and Some Early Expressions of Lytton Strachey's Ethics', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. XIII (2004)
- Todd Avery (ed.), '*Unpublished Works of Lytton Strachey*' (Abingdon, 2016)

As a great wit, an eccentric and a cultural rebel in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century, it should come as no surprise that Lytton Strachey has been the subject of multiple lengthy biographies. The best was written by Michael Holroyd. Critical treatment of Strachey's life and work began in the postwar era with works like Sander's and Kallich's biographíes of the author.[259] Despite these early efforts, the

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[258] Janes, 'Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness and John Maynard Keynes', 20

[259] Charles Richard Sanders, '*Lytton Strachey: His Mind and Art*' (New Haven, 1957); Martin Kallich, '*The Psychological Milieu of Lytton Strachey*' (New York, 1961)

definitive biography of Strachey would not emerge until the late 1960s: Michael Holroyd's 1967 publication of *'Lytton Strachey: The Unknown Years, 1880-1910'* and its 1971 second volume, '*Lytton Strachey: The Years of Achievement*'. [260] Holroyd's work remains the best guide to Strachey life for three reasons. First is the sheer amount of time which Holroyd spent researching his subject: most of his 1960s was dedicated to this task. Secondly is the unparalleled access to Strachey's work Holroyd was able to acquire. He lived with James Strachey, Lytton's brother, while he explored Lytton's correspondence. This experience included truly frightful lunches, including one of 'spam, a cold potato each, and lettuce leaves'.[261] Holroyd visited other figures in Strachey's milieu, such as Bertrand Russell, who invited Holroyd to 'his remote house in North Wales, high up on a hill overlooking the Irish Sea'.[262] Finally, Holroyd was the first major author to openly discuss Strachey's homosexuality, an essential part of Lytton's story and his relationships with those around him and wider British society. Though biographies since the 1970s have also included this element of the writer's life, none have enjoyed the intimate knowledge which Holroyd was able to find.[263]

Historical accounts of Strachey and his work provide a useful complement to longer-form biographies of the writer. Among different historians, Todd Avery's work stands out as particularly useful in building a picture of Strachey and his character. Avery is, to the author's knowledge, the only historian to focus on Strachey's early work, particularly on the papers he wrote and his engagement with contemporary social debates in Edwardian Britain. However, important chapters in Strachey's life remain unstudied by historians, such as 1912's '*Landmarks in French Literature*'. Furthermore, Strachey's significance as a ringleader in the Apostles and the Bloomsbury group has not received much historical attention, despite Leonard Woolf's description of Strachey as the student who exerted a 'dominating influence' on those around him. Furthermore, aside from Janes' description of Strachey as the 'inheritor of the mantle of Oscar Wilde,' there exists a clear space where a study

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[260] Subsequently repackaged as Michael Holroyd, '*Lytton Strachey: the New Biography*' (London, 1994)

[261] Ibid., 11

[262] Ibid., 17

[263] John Ferns, '*Lytton Strachey*' (Boston, 1988); Julie Anne Taddeo, '*Lytton Strachey and the Search for Modern Sexual Identity*' (Binghamton, 2002)

placing Strachey in the wider history of developing attitudes towards homosexuals in the early Twentieth-Century could be written.[264]

The Bloomsbury Group

Key Works:

- Craufurd D. Goodwin, 'The Bloomsbury Group as Creative Community', *History of Political Economy*, Vol. XLIII (2011)
- David Gadd, '*The Loving Friends: A Portrait of Bloomsbury*' (London, 1974)
- Jonathan Atkin, '*A War of Individuals: Bloomsbury Attitudes to the Great War*' (Manchester, 2002)
- S.P. Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*' (Toronto, 1995),
- Seyeda Zahra Nozen, Bahman Amani & Fatemeh Ziyarat, 'Blooming of the Novel in the Bloomsbury Group: An Investigation to the Impact of the Members of the Bloomsbury Group on the Composition of the Selected Works of Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, Vol. VI (2017)
- Steve Ellis, '*Virginia Woolf and the Victorians*' (Cambridge, UK., 2007)
- Todd Avery, 'Ethics Replaces Morality: The Victorian Legacy to Bloomsbury', *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, Vol. XLI (1998)
- Victoria Rosner (ed.), 'The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group' (Cambridge, UK., 2014)

The 'Bloomsbury Group' continues to attract arguments between historians. For instance, their ultimate worth and success is hotly contested. Rosner argues that 'an aura of sex and self-indulgence clings persistently to Bloomsbury', which plenty of commentators have responded to by presenting the group as 'a wholly malign influence on British art and politics.'[265] Sinclair delivered the memorable line that 'rarely in the field of human endeavour has so much been written about so few how achieved so little'.[266] Similarly, Lee presents the group as a 'caricature of an idle, snobbish and self-congratulatory rentier class'.[267] On the other side of the argument Nozen, Amani & Ziyarat describe the 'profound understanding' of Edwardian Society that the group's rich intellectual environment produced, and argue that their work

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[264] Janes, 'Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness', 21

[265] Rosner, 'Introduction', in Rosner (ed.), 'The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group', 2, 13

[266] Andrew Sinclair, '*The Red and the Blue: Intelligence, Treason and the Universities*' (London, 1987), 33

[267] Hermione Lee '*Virginia Woolf*' (London, 1996), 265

'made a great change in the formation of British fiction and nonfiction texts'.[268] Similarly, Goodwin celebrates the 'remarkably wide band of human knowledge' Bloomsbury members drew upon and contributed to, while Janes claims that 'the sexual attitudes of the Bloomsbury Group had an impact not simply in the realm of British culture but also of international politics'.[269] Another issue that surrounds the 'Bloomsbury Group' is the issue of whether they actually constitute a group. Opinions vary from Nozen & Co, who argue that the links between the members were so close that many of their works are misrepresented by being printed as the work of one person, to members of the set itself like Clive Bell, who considered the group as 'merely a collection of individuals each with his or her own views.'[270] Regarding this question of group cohesion, the answer lies somewhere in between these two extremes. It is incorrect to deny the major influence that different members of the Bloomsbury Group could have on each other. The pull of the Group towards its less political members during the First World War is a clear case of mutual influence. Faced with the desire to help their friends, even the previously apolitical members like Strachey were dragged into pacifist activities, eventually becoming ardent pacifists and in turn encouraging *their* close contacts to oppose the war more stridently. On the flipside, major portions of 'Eminent Victorians' were written in rural isolation, only later being checked over by fellow Group members. The artists and writers of the Bloomsbury set were their own people and followed their own path, yet remained strongly influenced by each other.

Heroism

Key Texts

- Barbara Korte, 'On Heroes and Hero Worship: Regimes of Emotional Investment in Mid-Victorian Popular Magazines', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. XLIX (2016)

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[268] Nozen, Amani & Ziyarat, 'Blooming of the Novel in the Bloomsbury Group,' 329

[269] Craufurd D. Goodwin, 'The Bloomsbury Group as Creative Community', *History of Political Economy*, Vol. XLIII (2011), 74; Janes, 'Eminent Victorians, Bloomsbury Queerness and John Maynard Keynes' The Economic Consequences of the Peace', 21

[270] Rosner, 'Introduction', in Rosner (ed.), 'The Cambridge Companion to the Bloomsbury Group', 2; Rosenbaum, '*The Bloomsbury Group: A Collection of Memoirs and Commentary*', 21

- Cristina Pividori & Andrew Monnickendam, 'War Heroes and Pacifics on the Same Front: Re-reading Heroism in Two Imperial War Memoirs', *Alicante Journal of English Studies*, Vol. XXV (2012)
- John Price, '*Everyday Heroism: Victorian constructions of the heroic civilian*' (London, 2014)
- Max Jones, 'National Hero and Very Queer Fish: Empire, Sexuality and the British Remembrance of General Gordon, 1918-72', *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol XXVI (2015)
- Max Jones.. 'What Should Historians Do With Heroes? Reflections on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Britain'.. *History Compass*.. Vol. V (2007)
- Olive Anderson, 'The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXXVI (1971)
- Stephen Miller, 'In Support of the 'Imperial Mission'? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899-1902', *Journal of Military History*, Vol. LXIX (2005)
- Veronica Kitchen & Jennifer Mathers (eds.), '*Heroism and Global Politics*' (London, 2018)

The heroic individual and the significance of their actions is a major concern in multiple social science disciplines. As Kitchen notes, the hero is a social construct that is 'filled with content': scholars divide over which aspects of this content are the most significant, how heroes become 'filled with content' and the significance of this content.[271] Regarding the importance of heroes, Allison & Goethals argue that heroes perform the central social function of representing social values and providing a model for action, an understanding which fits nicely in the context of Victorian and Edwardian Britain.[272] By contrast, Hartsock provides a gender-based reading, and argues that heroism has historically functioned as a way to valorise 'male' activities like warfare, sidelining traditionally feminine spheres of activity such as raising children.[273] On the process of becoming a hero, social scientists offer divergent opinions. Kasetsiri offers a very practical example of heroic creation in his study on heroes in Indonesia, describing a regional committee that sits down and proposes new national heroes and heroines, often done 'simply to provide financial benefits' for the

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[271] Veronica Kitchen & Jennifer Mathers, 'Introduction', Veronica Kitchen & Jennifer Mathers (eds.), '*Heroism and Global Politics*' (London, 2018), 4

[272] S.T. Allison & G.R. Goethals, '*Heroes: What They Do and Why We Need Them*' (Oxford, 2010), 153

[273] N. Hartsock, '*Money, Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism*' (Boston, MA, 1985), 144

'needy family' of the individual in question.[274] On the other side of the aisle, psychologists offer more hopeful accounts of what it takes to become a hero: merely to act in the interests of the needy, taking on risk and expecting little to nothing in return.[275] Behind this discrepancy lies different conceptions of what a hero is: hero as historical force, an individual who alone precipitated major historical change, or the hero simply as the exceptional human being.

The figure and importance of the heroic individual and their importance has been a historiographical issue since the Nineteenth Century: Thomas Carlyle's declaration in 1840 that 'the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have worked here' sparked a century of debate regarding the significance of individuals in history.[276] Despite the popularity of this idea in Carlyle's lifetime, the Scottish Philosopher's work positively received by figures ranging from Vincent van Gogh to Mahatma Gandhi, the preeminence of heroes in history increasingly fell out of fashion as a historiographical approach. The emphasis of Marxism and other approaches that emphasised the significance of groups like classes or factions replaced the heroic individual as the main forces of historical movement. However, the hero has recently been resurrected as a figure for study. Jones and others have demonstrated clearly the utility of studying heroic figures and the cultural discussion that surrounds them. Groop has noted how explorers like Henry Stanley provided a frame for European publics to visualise and legitimise imperial expansion in the late Nineteenth Century, while Mackenzie has argued that the commemoration of British soldier Henry Havelock can be used to consider the importance of chivalry to middle-classic Britons in the 1860s and 1870s.[277] Another

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[274] Charnvit Kasetsiri, 'The Construction of National Heroes and/or Heroines', in James Siegel & Audrey Kahin (eds.), '*Southeast Asia over Three Generations: Essays Presented to Benedict Anderson*' (Cornell, 2003), 19

[275] Z.E. Franco et als, 'Heroism: A Conceptual Analysis and Differentiation between Heroic Action and Altruism', *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. XV (2011)

[276] Thomas Carlyle, '*On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*' (Project Gutenberg, 1997), accessed via https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1091/pg1091-images.html

[277] Kim Stefan Groop, 'Exploring Africa in the Nordic Press: David Livingstone, Henry Stanley and the popular fascination with exploration and adventure in Africa in the late 19th Century', *Modernity, Frontiers and Revolutions*, Vol. I (2019); John M. MacKenzie (ed.), '*Popular Imperialism and the Military, 1850–1950*' (Manchester, 1992)

group of scholars have used the evolving perceptions of heroic figures as cultural barometres. For instance, the transition of General Gordon from paragon of imperial virtue to a largely forgotten anachronism has been used as a measure of British culture starting to leave imperial pride behind, and the differing fates of heroic scientists and soldiers has been seen as a sign of shifting cultural priorities.[278]

The United Kingdom and the British Empire, 1880-1918: Overviews

Key Texts

- David Edgerton, '*The Rise and Fall of the British Nation: a Twentieth Century History*' (London, 2018)
- Gary Magee & Andrew Thompson, '*Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, C. 1850-1914*' (Cambridge, UK., 2010)
- G.R. Searle, '*A New England? Peace and war, 1886-1918*' (London, 2004)
- Nancy Ellenberger, '*Balfour's World: Aristocracy and Political Culture at the Fin de Siecle*' (London, 2021)
- Simon Heffer, '*High Minds: The Victorians and the Birth of Modern Britain*' (London, 2013)

You could fill libraries with books which provide an overview of Victorian Britain. These works can be broken down and subdivided in multiple ways. Different authors choose to raise up different features of late Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Century Britain as vignettes through which the rest of the society can be understood. For instance, Simon Heffer bases his account of Victoria's reign on the numerous reform movements which sought to change British society, looking at education reform and then the rebuilding of the civil service in turn. By contrast, Searle frames his account through reference to the series of Imperial and European wars which Britain engaged in throughout this period. Given the very different impressions these two works provide, the choice of emphasis in writing a general history of the United Kingdom emerges as a very important choice. Some scholars have chosen to avoid this potential pitfall by focussing on a particular character, an approach which limits the scope of writing to the character's experience, but better allows for contradictions to be brought together, as we see in Ellenberger's study of Edwardian politics through Arthur

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[278] Jones, 'National Hero and Very Queer Fish'; Jones, M., Sebe, B., Strachan, J., Taithe, Bernard & Yeandle, Peter, 'Decolonising Imperial Heroes: Britain and France', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. XLV (2014)

Balfour's eyes, charting how the Prime Minister, like many others in his generation, was 'Self-consciously experimenting with new forms of literature, leisure, social behaviour and opportunities for… development.'[279]

A major issue in the history of British History before the last third of the Twentieth Century is the role given to the British Empire. Too often in the past, the Empire has been treated as a separate entity from the United Kingdom, as something which British people did abroad, rather than as a central concept to British self-understanding and an enormous political and social issue. The best accounts of this period, such as Edgerton's account integrate 'the Empire' and 'the United Kingdom' closely together, arguing that in '1900 the United Kingdom was (comparatively speaking) cosmopolitan, liberal, free-trading with the rest of Europe and the world and part of a much larger British empire, to a much greater extent than any other comparable part of the world.'[280] Accounts that ignore the imperial nature of British society in this period miss an overwhelmingly significant cultural and political aspect of life in the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom and the British Empire, 1880-1918: Culture

Key Texts:

- Alice Bonzom, 'Human Derelicts and the Deterioration of the Nation: Discourses of Identity and Otherness in Victorian and Edwardian Britain', *Revue Française de civilisation Britannique*, Vol XXVII (2022)
- Allen Warren, 'Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. CI (1986)
- J.H. Grainger, 'England, whose England? Edwardian Patriotism (1900-1914)', *The Critical Review*, Vol. XX (1978)
- Jim English, 'Empire Day in Britain, 1904-58', *The Historical Journal*, Vol. XLIX (2017)
- Mark Girouard, '*The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*' (London, 1981)
- Sally Ledger, 'In Darkest England: The Terror of Degeneration in Fin de Siecle Britain', *Literature and History*, Vol. LXXI (1995)
- Stephen Heathorn, '*For Home, Country, and Race: Constructing Gender, Class, and Englishness in the Elementary School, 1880–1914*' (Toronto, 2000)

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[279] Nancy Ellenberger, '*Balfour's World: Aristocracy and Political Culture at the Fin de Siecle*' (London, 2021), 301
[280] Edgerton, '*The Rise and Fall of the British Nation*', 34

- Paul Readman, 'The Place of the Past in English Culture c. 1890-1914', *Past & Present*, Vol. CLXXXIV (2005)
- Paul Ward, '*Britishness since 1870*' (London, 2004)

British culture in this period is another topic with a truly colossal body of scholarship lying behind it. This thesis has focussed on two particular cultural issues. Firstly, cultural anxiety, also expressed as 'fear of degeneration' is a major theme in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Different historians have examined different aspects of this phenomenon. For instance, Bonzom has considered how fears of degeneration drove scientific thinking in early Twentieth Century Britain, with the perceived threat of 'human derelicts' spurring the development of odious new disciplines like eugenics.[281] Another group of accounts explores the ways in which British elites attempted to stoke the fires of patriotism and improve national health, from English's study of the creation of 'Empire Day' in the early Twentieth Century and Warren considering the rise in youth movements in the first decades of the 1900s, presenting them as key battlegrounds for struggles over perceived national values and futures.

Alongside focussing on the fears of cultural decline, the thesis also draws upon works which analyse commemoration of the past in late Victorian and Edwardian England. Some scholars approach this theme by trying to offer a materialist account of the increasing popularity of historical events and sites in these years, with Readman arguing that 'consciousness of accelerating change' caused 'a great surge' in ways to identify with the past, from centenary celebrations to the official designation of swathes of sites of historical interest across the British Isles.[282] Another strand of this group of works focusses on the commemoration of a particular period in the past, rather than mechanisms of remembrance. Girouard's work on the revival of chivalry and mediaevalism in Victorian Britain is a classic in this tradition, demonstrating the newfound significance of the Middle Ages to many in the 1880s. Against these works, the contribution of Strachey is thrown into relief: by breaking with the past, Lytton was in the vanguard of a new cultural movement.

The United Kingdom and the British Empire, 1880-1918: Aristocracy and Elites

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[281] Bonzom, 'Human Derelicts and the Deterioration of the Nation', 1

[282] Paul Readman, 'The Place of the Past in English Culture c. 1890-1914', *Past & Present*, Vol. CLXXXIV (2005), 147

Key Texts

- Daniela Donnini Maccio, 'Ethics, economics and power in the Cambridge Apostle' internationalism between the two world wars', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. XXII (2016)
- David Cannadine, '*The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*' (London, 1992)
- Peter Allen, 'A Victorian Intellectual Elite: Records of the Cambridge Apostles, 1820-77', *Victorian Studies*, Vol. XXXIII (1989)

Given the thesis' focus on Lytton Strachey, an undeniably elite figure who moved and socialised almost exclusively among rich, aristocratic people in wealthy parts of England, the particular historiography of the Victorian and Edwardian aristocrats is worth mentioning. An exceptional work in this tradition is David Cannadine's '*The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*', which outlines the landed elites of the United Kingdom gradually losing their of social status and economic dominance over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a book which pairs very well with Edgerton's overview of the period. Edgerton also notes the significance of the aristocracy's falling status in this period, pairing it with the rise of new groups, such as factory-owning capitalists and middling classes in the countryside. Carl Schorske's classic work '*Fin-de-Siecle Vienna*' offers an interesting parallel when set against these books, particularly his argument that once pushed out of the highest perches of the social hierarchy, aristocratic Austrians turned to detached aestheticism as a balm for their damaged pride and sense of purpose, echoing the Bloomsbury Group.[283]

Much attention in studies of the British elite in this period focusses upon the Cambridge Apostles, looking at their social radicalism and evolving philosophy. This emphasis is understandable, given the fame which many Apostles achieved in this period, the range of their work and interests, and perhaps the allure of looking into the history of a radical 'secret' society that sought to rule Britain as an intellectual elite just as it rejected much of British life, not least the presence of women. While these studies are useful, particularly when studying members like Strachey, future studies would do well to look beyond the cluster of elites that congregated in Southern England, and turn to relatively understudied regions in the United Kingdom, such as the experiences of elites in Wales and Cornwall, or the perception of aristocrats in other parts of the British empire, such as the British Raj or Canada.

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[283] Carl Schorske, '*Fin-de-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture*' (New York, 1981)

The United Kingdom and the British Empire, 1880-1918: Masculinity & Sexuality

Key Texts

- Anthony Wohl, '*The Victorian family: structure and stresses*' (London, 1978)
- Colin Tyler, 'J.A. Symonds, Socialism and the Crisis of Sexuality in fin-de-siecle Britain', *History of European Ideas*, Vol. XLIII (2017)
- John Tosh, '*Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth Century Britain*' (Harlow, 2005)Maria DiCenzo, 'Justifying Their Modern Sisters: History Writing and the British Suffrage Movement', *Victorian Review*, Vol. XXXI (2005)
- P.F. McDevitt, '*May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire*' (Basingstoke, 2004)
- Richard Ellmann, '*Oscar Wilde*' (New York, 1988)
- Susan Kingsley Kent, '*Gender and Power in Britain, 1640-1990*' (Routledge, 1999)

Masculinity is a hugely important aspect of culture and deeply affected lives in Britain in this period. Scholars like McDevitt note that the last decades of the Victorian Reign saw the development and popularisation of many aspects of masculinity now considered classic in Britain, from the focus on team sport to the identification of masculinity with chauvinistic nationalism. As Griffin argues, this cultural development may be, at least in part, a response to the increasing assertiveness of feminist groups in Britain, challenging social spaces that previously had been seen as exclusively male preserves. Broadening out to an imperial scale, Lewis offers a model of the British empire as 'an empire of sentiment', noting that British codes of masculinity were shared across different imperial territories, and used as ways to bridge cultural and physical distance.[284] The idea of a masculine ideal of heroic service lying at the heart of British culture in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries has been critiqued and challenged by Korte notes that the Victorian period was 'not unconditionally affirmative of heroism', rather raising up different standards of conduct in response to time-specific 'needs and problems' such as the rise of international rivals and anxieties over declining control of imperial territory.[285] However, though masculinity may have been contingent on threats appearing on the horizon, by the Edwardian period such threats were almost constantly appearing,

[284] Joanna Lewis, '*Empire of Sentiment: The Death of Livingstone and the Myth of Victorian Imperialism*' (Cambridge, UK., 2018)

[285] Barbara Korte, 'On Heroes and Hero Worship: Regimes of Emotional Investment in Mid-Victorian Popular Magazines', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. XLIX (2016), 181

meaning there was a consistently strong call for masculine heroes to protect Britain and its Empire.

A major group of works emphasises the specific importance of masculine heroes in late Victorian culture. For instance, Miller argues that this period saw a 'worship of national heroes' such as Henry Havelock, a claim supported by Anderson's proposal that the Crimean War marked the onset of a powerful model of 'Christian Militarism', in which an ideal of devout soldiers fighting for the Empire became a model which 'flourished deeply' in British culture.[286] The importance of masculinity in this cultural setting has also been noted by John Price, who expands earlier models by noting that alongside cultural fascination with major imperial heroes, there was also a broad cultural expectation for and reward of acts of masculine valour by regular people in the United Kingdom- a 'distinct discourse of 'everyday' heroism'.[287]

<u>The United Kingdom and the British Empire, 1880-1918: The First World War</u>

Key Texts

- Adrian Gregory, *'The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War'* (Cambridge, UK., 2008)
- Anthony Fletcher, 'Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of Victorian Manliness', *Journal of the Historical Association*, Vol. XCXI (2014)
- Barbara Tuchman, *'August 1914: The Guns of August'* (New York, 1963)
- Catriona Pennell, *'A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland'* (Oxford, 2012)
- Colin Veitch, 'Play up! Play up! And Win the War!' Football, the Nation and the First World War 1914-15', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. XX (1985)
- Ian Beckett, *'The Great War'* (London, 2007)
- J. Mackenzie, *'The Children of the Souls: A Tragedy of the First World War'* (London, 1986)
- Michael Snape, 'God and the British Soldier: Religion and the British Army in the First and Second World Wars' (Abingdon, 2005)
- Paul Fussell, *'The Great War and Modern Memory'* (Oxford, 2013)

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[286] Stephen Miller, 'In Support of the 'Imperial Mission'? Volunteering for the South African War, 1899-1902', *Journal of Military History*, Vol. LXIX (2005), 701; Anderson, 'The growth of Christian militarism in mid-Victorian Britain', 46

[287] John Price, *'Everyday Heroism: Victorian constructions of the heroic civilian'* (London, 2014), 2

The First World War is a historical event of enormous importance and resultantly has a huge field of scholarship surrounding it. From Tuchman's classic account that leads through the secretive machinations that lead to the outbreak of war to the emergence of an exhausted and disillusioned Europe in 1918, to Paul Fussell's evocative account of the fighting (a favourite detail being that 'a perceptive observer could date corpses and skeletons lying on disused battlefields by their evolving dress'), the First World War offers no shortage of historiographical debates and scholarly discussion.[288] Given its focus on the evolution of identity in this period, the thesis focusses to a large extent upon the cultural history of the war. Of particular importance are works that consider how wartime experiences affected cultural notions that had been formed in the Victorian and Edwardian period, among which Fletcher offers a powerful statement of the collapse of Victorian masculinity in the face of the grinding and hopeless years spent in trench warfare.[289] Other historians also consider the cultural shifts war brought, such as Sorlin's attribution of the end of 'any idea of historical progress or possible improvement of the human condition', to the brutality and senselessness of the Great War.[290] Though very useful, these works often focus to a large degree on the experience of soldiers, leaving cultural change at home to the side, an omission which this thesis addresses.

The United Kingdom and the British Empire, 1880-1918: The First World War (Home Front)

Key Texts

- Denise M. Amos, 'Conscientious Objectors: men of Nottinghamshire who failed the call to arms, 1914-1918', *Midland History*, Vol. XLV (2020)
- Lois Bibbings, 'Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objects in the Great War', *Social and Legal Studies*, Vol. XII (2003)
- Max Hodgson, 'Pathologising 'Refusal': Prison, Health and Conscientious Objectors during the First World War', *Social History of Medicine*, Vol XXXV (2022)
- Thomas Kennedy, '*The Hound of Conscience: A History of the No-Conscription Fellowship, 1914-1919*' (Fayetteville, 1981),

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[288] Fussell, '*The Great War and Modern Memory*', 54

[289] Anthony Fletcher, 'Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of Victorian Manliness', *Journal of the Historical Association*, Vol. XCXI (2014), 52

[290] Pierre Sorlin, 'Cinema and the Memory of the Great War', in Michael Paris (eds.), '*The First World War and Popular Cinema: 1914 to the Present*' (Edinburgh, 1999), 13

- Arthur Marwick, '*The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*' (Cambridge, UK., 1965)
- Brock Millman, '*Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*' (London, 2000)
- Douglas Newton, 'The Lansdown 'Peace Letter' of 1917 and the Prospect of Peace by Negotiation with Germany,' *Australia Journal of Politics and History*, Vol. XLVIII (2002)
- Hew Strachan (ed.), '*The British Home Front and the First World War*' (Cambridge, UK., 2023)

Alongside texts which consider the experience of fighting in the First World War, another body of work examines the effects and experiences of the war away from the frontlines. Works looking at the home front, engage directly with the common experience of life distant from war: Gregory notes that despite the iconic status of the First World War in received British memory, fighting was at best a minority experience for British citizens from 1914-1918: 'even by a very broad definition a considerable majority of families were untouched by the loss of a close relative'.[291] The years of war did not call a pause to social, economic and cultural change in the United Kingdom, and the war itself pushed British society in new directions. An interesting group of works examine the growth and significance of pacifist and peace movements during the wartime years. As Millman shows, pacifist organisations like the UDC were far from fringe issues during the fighting, requiring the British Government to set up alternatives and combat their growth across the country. Considering these works alongside the case of Bloomsbury Group Pacifism suggests strongly that historical research as yet has largely ignored or underestimated the vigorousness of political debate during wartime. Fortunately, new works are emerging which provide comprehensive accounts of the social and economic changes of wartime Britain, as in Strachean's recently published edition. Despite these valuable contributions, the Home Front continues to be an understudied area of British History and the lessons it offers to other disciplines remain unexhausted.

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[291] Adrian Gregory, *'The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War'* (Cambridge, UK., 2008), 252

Appendices

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Chronology

16 December, 1879: Beginning of the First Boer War, quickly followed by a British defeat

1 March, 1880: Lytton Strachey born in Clapham Common, London

4 October, 1883: The Foundation of the Boy's Brigade in Glasgow, the first uniformed youth organisation. The Brigade is dedicated to developing Christian manliness.

1883: Seeley's Expansion of England lectures provides a popular and triumphalist narrative of Britain's reluctant acquisition of empire and cautioning about the future of the empire

4 January, 1884: Foundation of the Fabian Society marks a set towards the growth of working class politics and the Labour Party as a major political force

13 March, 1884: Beginning of the Siege of Khartoum with General Charles Gordon trapped in the city

15 November, 1884: Start of the Berlin Conference, which formalises and delineates European spheres of influence in Africa, accelerating ongoing efforts to establish colonies and protectorates in Africa

6 December, 1884: The Representation of the People Act continues the extension of the franchise to male UK citizens

9 June, 1885: Fall of Gladstone's Second Government in the wake of the failure to relieve Khartoum in time to save British forces

8 April, 1886: Start of Parliamentary debates on Irish Home Rule, eventually failing and sinking Gladstone's third government ministry

20 June, 1887: Celebration of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, marking the 50th year of Victoria's reign

31 May 1889: The Naval Defence Act mandates the Royal navy to at least equal the combined strength of the second and third strongest global naval powers

26 September, 1893: Lytton Strachey starts formal education at Abbotsholme School in Rochester

18 February, 1895: Beginning of the Trial of Oscar Wilde for sodomy, eventually resulting in Wilde being sentenced to hard labour

18 September, 1897: Lytton Strachey starts university education at the University of Manchester

2 September, 1898: British Victory at Omdurman, a victory over Sudanese tribesmen observed by a young Winston Churchill

30 September, 1899: Lytton Strachey transfers to the University of Cambridge

11 October, 1899: Start of the Second Boer War

18 October, 1899: Start of the Boxer Rebellion, an anti-foreign uprising in CHina that sees multinational expeditions arrive to fight the Boxers

22 January, 1901: Death of Queen Victoria at the age of 81, ending her 64-year reign and passing the throne to her son, Edward VII, so beginning the Edwardian period

30 December, 1902: Discovery Expedition led by Robert Scott reaches the furthest South ever seen by man.

10 October, 1903: Emmeline Pankhurst forms the Women's Social and Political Union, advocating direct action and civil disobedience in pursuit of women's suffrage

3 August, 1904: British military expedition led by Colonel Younghusband captures Lhasa in Tibet.

13 October, 1905: Lytton Strachey completes his thesis and leaves Cambridge

1 August, 1907: The first Scout camp held on Brownsea Island, led by Lieutenant-General Baden-Powell.

10 December, 1907: Ruyard Kipling wins the Nobel Prize in Literature.

1 January, 1908: Nimrod Expedition begins, the first of Shackleton's expeditions from New Zealand to Antarctica.

27 April, 1910: David Lloyd George's People's Budget is passed by the Houses of Parliament.

May, 1911: Lytton Strachey grows his beard

May, 1911: Lytton Strachey first major work, *Landmarks in French Literature***, is published**

17 January, 1912: Robert Scott reaches the South Pole, only to find he has been beaten by Roald Amundsen. He dies on his return to his ship.

November, 1912: Lytton Strachey starts writing *Eminent Victorians*

4 August, 1914: The United Kingdom declares war upon the German Empire

1915: Beginning of Trench Warfare, Gallipoli Campaign

27 January, 1916: Military Service Act introduces conscription for military service for all men aged 18-41

1 July, 1916: The Battle of the Somme starts

17 August, 1917: Wilfred Owen writes iconic war poem 'Dulce et Decorum Est'

6 February 1918: Representation of the People Act provides votes for women over 30 and gives the vote to all men over 21. Conscientious objectors are barred from voting.

4 March, 1918: First recorded case of the Spanish Flu recorded in Kansas

9 May, 1918: Lytton Strachey publishes '*Eminent Victorians*'

11 November, 1918: Armistice signed, ending the First World War

18 July, 1919: The Cenotaph is unveiled in Central London, formally commemorating the dead of the First World War

19 July, 1919: Peace Day is held to commemorate the end of the First World War, featuring rioting ex-servicemen burning down Town Halls

11 November, 1920: The Unknown Soldier is buried in Westminster Abbey

Glossary

The Bloomsbury Group was a group of English intellectuals who lived in the Bloomsbury area of London in the early 20th Century. Prominent members include John Maynard Keynes, Virginia Woolf and Lytton Strachey, brought together by belief in the central importance of art and a shared education background.

High Church Anglicanism refers to a particular set of Anglican beliefs that emphasises the use of ritual practices typically associated with Roman Catholicism. In the Nineteenth Century, the term came to be associated with Anglo-Catholicism and the Oxford Movement.

The Oxford Movement was a reform movement in British religious life, largely composed of Oxford-associated senior figures in the Anglican Church. They called for the reinstatement of older Christian traditions, and were closely aligned with the Anglo-Catholic movement. The two key members of the movement were Edward Pusey and John Henry Newman.

Nonconformists were English Protestants who did not adhere to the practices of the Established Anglican Church. The term includes a variety of different Christian denominations, including Methodists, Quakers, Baptists and Presbyterians.

The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood was a group of English artists founded in 1848. Their art emphasised abundant detail and complex compositions, commonly referring to historical and Christian themes. Rejecting the influence of Sir Joshua Reynolds on English art, they identified with the prominent art critic John Ruskin.

Tory, or Toryism refers to a British variant of conservatism that maintains the validity and legitimacy of the existing social order. Toryism is typically characterised by support for the power of the monarchy and aristocracy,

support of the Anglican church and opposition to reform. The term originated during the English civil war as a term of abuse against the parliamentary enemies of the Whig faction.

Whigs were members of the 'Whig' political faction in post-civil war British politics. Originally distinguished by opposition to absolute monarchy and Catholic emancipation, from the 1688 Glorious Revolution Whigs gained political preeminence. By the 1800s, Whig supporters were characterised by support for Parliamentary supremacy, free trade, expansion of the franchise and the abolition of the Slave Trade. The Whig Party was amalgamated into the Liberal Party in the 1850s.

Pledge

"On my honour as a student of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, I submit this work in good faith and pledge that I have neither given nor received unauthorised assistance on it."

Jasper James William Newport

<u>Vita</u>

Jasper Newport was born in Cheltenham in the United Kingdom, growing up in the small town of Stroud in Gloucestershire. He completed his Undergraduate in History at University College London, focussing upon the Early Modern Period and the Modern History of Asia. At the Diplomatische Akademie, he focussed upon European History, and the evolving position of the United States and Great Britain in the international system. Alongside his studies, he worked for the Diplomatische Akademie as a Teaching Assistant for the History Department and as an intern for the Embassy of Malta, in addition to running the academy's bar and serving as Treasurer for the 'Students Advocating Gender Equality' Society. After completing his studies in Vienna, Jasper Newport hopes to launch a career in international security as part of the British Diplomatic Service.