This paper explores what the political history of Victorian Britain would look like if viewed through the lens of the history of masculinity. What difference did it make to British politics that the political elites were overwhelmingly male and that the electorate was exclusively male until 1918? The paper will examine how the conduct of politics was shaped by shifting cultural ideals and practices of masculinity. It explores how notions of political leadership were influenced by ideals of ‘manliness’; how working-class politics was shaped by male workplace culture; how reforming working-class masculinities became central to liberal politics; and how ideas about ‘gentlemanliness’, honour, sexuality and heroism influenced the practice of political elites.

These questions offer a way of exploring a set of deeper theoretical issues about the relations of power that existed between competing masculinities, and the ways in which men were or were not able to appropriate different male identities, both instrumentally and subjectively. Those taking the course will be introduced to a variety of approaches to political history, including the history of political languages, the social history of political activism, and the history of emotions. A wide range of sources will be used including diaries, letters, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary speeches, newspapers, cartoons, and photographs.

Teaching:
There will be two introductory lectures, one setting out the major debates in the history of masculinity, and one providing an overview of the political history of the period for those who have not taken studied modern British history at Part I. There will then be 15 two-hour classes on the thematic topics set out below (seven in Michaelmas, eight in Lent). Classes will be structured around student presentations and group discussion. Some classes will begin with a twenty minute lecture introducing the topic and providing necessary context. In Easter term there will four classes: one on the different kinds of sources used in the course, two on gobbet preparation, and one final class for consolidation and revision.

Thematic topics:
1. Learning to be a man: schools, street corners, workplaces and universities
2. The ideal of gentlemanliness in Victorian politics
3. Intimacy and sociability in politics
4. Sexuality in politics
5. Political bodies
6. Performing masculinities
   a. Performing masculinities in parliament
   b. Leadership and ‘manliness’
7. The challenge to aristocratic and gentry masculinities
   a. Radical critiques of aristocratic masculinities and the problem of the ‘country gentleman’
   b. The ‘man of business’ in politics
8. Honour and violence in Victorian politics
9. Heroism and political culture
   a. Military masculinities
   b. Imperial masculinities
10. Citizenship and enfranchisement
    a. Changing conceptions of ‘fitness’ for the vote
    b. Women’s suffrage
11. Remaking working-class masculinities
Seminar topics:

**Michaelmas**

1) **Lecture 1: introduction to Victorian political history**

**Secondary reading**

*M. Bentley Politics without democracy 1815-1914 (2nd ed., 1996), ch. 2-5.

**Lecture 2: approaches to the history of masculinity**

Thomas Wright, ‘The composition of the working classes’ in *Our new masters* (1873), pp. 1-25. [26 pages]
Extracts from Thomas Hughes, *The manliness of Christ* (1879), pp. 1-7, 17-34. [25 pages]
[112 pages]

**Secondary reading**


2) **Learning to be a man: schools, street corners, workplaces and universities**

This class will offer a survey of the institutions that set themselves the task of turning boys into men. How did the public schools and universities shape the formation of the gender identities of members of the governing elites? What were the equivalent institutions that shaped working-class masculinities, and how did they influence working-class political identities? What was the significance of women’s exclusion from these institutions?

Extracts from Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857), pp. 78-80 [father’s advice 2], 233-4, 237-9 [Arnold and corporal punishment, the plan to promote Tom’s manliness 5], 248-53 [prayers 6], 311-13 [fight 3], 329-32 [fight 4], 345-6 [cribs 2], 364-7 [schoolboy morality 4].
[117 pages]
Secondary reading

Elites:

Non-elites:
*Emma Griffin, *Liberty’s dawn: a people’s history of the industrial revolution* (2013), part III
Iorwerth Prothero, *Artisans and politics* (1979), ch. 1, 2, 10.

3) Gentlemanliness
This class studies the influence of the ideal of ‘gentlemanliness’ on Victorian political culture. What made a ‘gentleman’? How important was this gendered identity to the creation of a coherent governing elite? How socially inclusive was this ideal? How was gentlemanly status lost and what were the political consequences of failing to be a gentleman?

How to shine in society, or the art of conversation (Glasgow, 1867), pp. 10-13. [4 pages]
Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party, 28.11.52 [Pakington complains Disraeli is not a gentleman]. [1 page]
Disraeli letters, V 1675, 1959, 2189 [3 pages]
[80 pages]

Secondary reading

Michael Curtin, Propriety and position, a study of Victorian manners (New York, 1987).

4) Intimacy and sociability in politics

Friendships have been a powerful force in politics, providing the social connections and emotional support without which political activism would wither. The social history of political action therefore needs to study changing norms of male friendship and the forms of sociability that created and sustained these friendships.

Rules and regulations for the government of the Athenaeum, with an alphabetical list of the members (1862) [5 pages]
W. Fraser Rae, ‘Political clubs and party organisation’ Nineteenth Century (May 1878), pp. 912-16, 919-20. [7 pages]
Abraham Hayward, ‘Clubs’, Fraser’s Magazine 73 (March 1866) pp. 342, 362-7. [7 pages]
Morning Post, 22 June, 1846, p. 5; 17 April 1848, p. 6; 11 Feb. 1850, p. 6 [on aristocratic salons] [3 pages]
John Vincent, ed., Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party, 27.6.50, pp. 31-3. [3 pages]
Disraeli letters, VI 2609, 2615-16, 2627. [3 pages]
Disraeli and Lennox: Disraeli letters, VI 2346, 2382. [2 pages]
Disraeli letters, VII: 2894, 2977 [2 pages]
Disraeli letters, VIII: 3841 [1 page]
Wellington political correspondence I: 1833-November 1834 (1975), pp. 256-7, 241-2. [4 pages]


Gladstone Diaries: 10/7/79 [1 page]

[88 pages]

**Secondary reading**


5) **Sexuality in politics**

This topic explores the way in which attitudes to sexuality shaped Victorian political culture. This has two dimensions. First, these ideas shaped what was considered ‘scandalous’ behaviour. Second, heteronormative assumptions underpinned the ways in which members of the male political elite interacted.


*Disraeli letters*, VIII: 3866 [1 page]


6) Political bodies

The literature on masculinity has yet to engage seriously with the history of old age: what kinds of masculinity were available to old men incapable of displaying the same characteristics associated with younger men? Is it useful to think of the able-bodied as ‘temporarily non-disabled’, and what might this do to our understandings of masculinity? How did the gender identities of those disabled through old age differ from those of younger men disabled from birth or through accident? This forms a necessary context for understanding the careers of Lord Palmerston and William Gladstone, for example.

Sources

‘One of no party’ [James Grant], Random recollections of the House of Commons from the year 1830 to the close of 1835 (1836), pp. 181, 184. [2 pages]
Leslie Stephen, Life of Henry Fawcet (1885), pp. 43-72. [30 pages]

S. L. Steele, *Arthur Macmorrough Kavanagh* (1891), pp. 8-10, 18-19, 128-9 [landlord and marriage], 134-8 [local giver of justice, effects of ageing, diary entry on sense of personal mission], 163-8, 201-4 [on losing in 1884], 301-2. [24 pages]

T. Wright, *The life of Colonel Fred Burnaby* (1908), pp. 34-6, 163-4. [5 pages]


*Disraeli letters*, VII: 3215. [1 page]

*Gladstone Diaries* 13/9/42, 25/2/74, 28/12/79, 12/2/85, 18/12/93. [3 pages]


*How to shine in society, or the art of conversation* (Glasgow, 1860), pp. 16-20. [5 pages]

Henry Lucy, *A diary of two parliaments. The Disraeli parliament, 1874-1880* (1885), pp. 10, 40 115, 159-60. [5 pages]


[103 pages]

Secondary reading


Vanessa Warne, “To invest a cripple with peculiar interest”: artificial legs and upper-class amputees at mid-century’, *Victorian Review* 25.2 (Fall 2009).


7) Performing masculinities: a) Performing masculinities in parliament

This topic explores the public images that male politicians tried to construct in parliament, looking at emotional control, clothing, body language, and manners.
‘One of no party’ [James Grant], *Random recollections of the House of Commons from the year 1830 to the close of 1835* (1836), pp. 77-9, 81, 90-4, 172-5 [on Althorp], 209-16 [comparing Morpeth and Howick], 245 [Burdett] [22 pages]
Sir Robert Farquharson, *In and out of parliament* (1911), pp. 236-41. [6 pages]
David Anderson, *Scenes in the Commons* (1884), p. 207. [1 page]
[110 pages]

**Secondary reading**


**Lent Term**

8) **Leadership and ‘manliness’**

How far were expectations of political leaders gendered? How did the public images created by political leaders draw on or challenge accepted models of masculinity? Under what circumstances was the ‘manliness’ of leaders called into question and how far did this constitute a serious political problem?
‘One of no party’ [James Grant], *Random recollections of the House of Commons from the year 1830 to the close of 1835* (1836), pp. 105-12, 115 [on Peel]; 194-7 [on Russell]. [13 pages]

Disraeli letters, VII: 2220X. [1 page]


Russell: Lytton Strachey and Roger Fulford, eds., *The Greville Memoirs* (8 vols., 1938), III, 162-3; VI 234-44 [on Peel]; V, 459-60; VI 51. [16 pages]

John Vincent, ed., *Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party: the political journals of Lord Stanley, 1849-69* (1978), 4.7.50; 17.8.52; 16.12.52; 11.4.54. [5 pages]


Disraeli letters V 1769. [1 page]


Extracts from T. P. O’Connor, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian* (2 vols., 1929) 1, pp. 53-5 [1 page]

Selection of images of Palmerston, Lord John Russell, Disraeli and Gladstone. [8 pages]

[124 pages]

Secondary reading

Manliness and leadership:


Case studies of individual leaders:


On Sir Robert Peel, see Richard Gaunt, *Sir Robert Peel* (2010), ch. 5, 6, 8.


9) **Radical critiques of aristocratic masculinities and the problem of the ‘country gentleman’**

A major trope in British politics has been criticism of aristocratic political elites characterised as effete, libertine and amateurish. These radical criticisms challenged, at one remove, the figure of the ‘country gentleman’ that featured at the heart of nineteenth-century Conservative politics. The debate over the characteristics of ‘the country gentleman’ was one of the ways in which the Conservative Party thought through the consequences of a more democratic political system.

Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Parkes, 26 Dec. 1838. [1 page]
Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 1 March 1839 [1 page]
Letter from Richard Cobden to George Combe, 17 July 1848 [1 page]
Letter from Richard Cobden to John Bright, 5 March 1851 [1 page]
Speech by John Bright on the aristocratic complexion of Russell’s government in 1849: *Hansard* 105, col. 1209-10 (5 June 1849). [1 page]
*Manchester Times*, 16 May 1855. [1 page]
Ernest Jones on aristocratic vice: *People’s paper*, 7 Apr. 1855, p. 4; 30 Sept. 1854, p. 4. [2 pages]
*Northumbrian*, ‘The ruling minority’ *Reynold’s Newspaper*, 25 August 1872, p. 3. [1 page]
Extracts from Labrouche’s speech against the aristocracy: HC Deb 05 March 1886 vol 303 cc20-31. [2 pages]
Thomas Wright, *Habits and customs of the working classes* (1867), pp. 7-10. [4 pages]
*Disraeli letters* V 1816; VI 2669. [3 pages]
John Vincent, ed., *Disraeli, Derby and the Conservative Party: the political journals of Lord Stanley*, 1849-69 (1978), 7.5.50; 5.3.51; 30.4.51; 25.11.52; 9.2.53; 17.3.53; 20.11.53; 22.11.53; 14.12.53. [5 pages]
H. H. Herbert, ‘A word to country gentlemen by one of themselves’ *National Review* 5 (1885), pp. 437-43. [7 pages]

**Secondary reading**


---

10) The ‘man of business’ in politics

The literature on nineteenth-century middle-class masculinities has ignored the centrality of work to middle-class male identities. This class will explore how middle-class MPs invoked their professional identities in the course of their political activities. These men claimed forms of technocratic expertise that were unavailable to women, and which challenged the political authority of the leisureed classes.

Letter from Richard Cobden to Francis Place, 17 Sept. 1840 [1 page]
Letter from Richard Cobden to Edward Watkin, 9 Oct. 1841 [1 page]
Letter from Richard Cobden to Frederick Cobden, 11 March 1843 [1 page]
Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 10 June 1846 [1 page]
Letter from Richard Cobden to John Bright, 8 Dec. 1849 [1 page]
Extracts from W.E. Forster speech on commercial diplomacy *Hansard* 177, col 1850-7 (17 March 1865). [2 pages]
Edwin Hodder, *The Life of Samuel Morley* (1887), pp. 32-6, 121-6, 191-4, 208-11, 214 [20 pages]
Sir Robert Farquharson, *The House of Commons from within* (1912), pp. 21-4, 85. [5 pages] [111 pages]

**Secondary reading**
**11) Honour and violence in Victorian politics**

Conceptions of honour were vital in structuring both interpersonal and inter-state relationships in the nineteenth century. This class will trace how men sought to defend their honour by examining duels fought between politicians. This will provide a context for thinking about how honour was invoked in political discourse, particularly in debates about foreign policy.

Letter from Richard Cobden to George Combe, 2 Feb. 1846 [1 page]
Duel between Wellington v. Winchilsea: *Times*, 23 March, 1829, p. 5; 31 March 1829, p. 4. [2 pages]
*Wellington political correspondence I: 1833-November 1834* (1975), pp. 660, 665-6, 670. [4 pages]
Duel between Lord Powerscourt and J. A. Roebuck: *Times*, 22 May 1839, p. 5. [1 page]
Richard Cobden’s reply to Sir Thomas Hastings’s challenge *Times*, 19 Dec. 1850 [1 page]
Duel between George Smythe and Col. Romilly, *Times* reports, 22-25 May 1852 [3 pages]


Gladstone-Manning correspondence, vol II, pp. 49-51, 54-6. [6 pages]


[74 pages]

Secondary:


M. Chamberlain *British foreign policy in the age of Palmerston* (1980).


12) **Heroism and political culture 1: Military masculinities**

This class will look at ideals of ‘manliness’ as they were articulated during the invasion scares of the 19th century, and conflicts from the Crimean War to the Second Boer War. It will also examine commentaries identifying military masculinities as problematic and socially disruptive.


Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 17 Dec. 1849 [1 page]

Letter from Richard Cobden to Robertson Gladstone, 29 March 1851 [1 page]

Letter from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 19 Apr. 1852 [1 page]

Letter from Richard Cobden to Henry Ashworth, 16 Oct. 1852 [1 page]

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, ‘Riflemen form!’ [1 page]

T. Hughes, ‘The Volunteer’s Catechism’ *Macmillan’s Magazine* 2 (July 1860) [9 page]
Sir John Tenniel cartoon 'Winner of the Queen’s Prize Captain Punch. ‘Another bullseye. Pam! Eighteen a head! First place still! And mind you keep it!!’ Punch 1864 [1 page]

Francis Paget, A word to soldiers about Christianity and manliness (1889) [22 pages]

Disraeli letters VI, 2705 [1 page]

Letter from Lord Ponsonby to Disraeli (24.1.54) Hughenden papers B/XXI/p/364-5. [1 page]


*Times* 18 Nov. 1848, p. 4 on meeting of Financial Reform Association. [1 page]

David Anderson, Scenes in the Commons (1884), pp. 194-5. [2 pages]


T. Wright, The life of Colonel Fred Burnaby (1908), pp. 289-90, 293. [3 pages]

Extracts from parliamentary debates on abolition of purchase of commissions *Hansard* 204, cols. 1397-1415 (6 March 1871); *Hansard* 207, cols. 1544-620 (13 July 1871). [5 pages]


*Wellington political correspondence I: 1833-1834* (1875), pp. 156-9, 393. [5 pages]


[118 pages]

Secondary reading


*Hugh Cunningham, The volunteer force: a social and political history, 1859-1908* (1975)


13) Heroism and political culture 2: Imperial masculinities

Anxieties about the need to produce men capable of governing the empire were a persistent refrain in political discourse. Why, and with what effect?


Letters from Richard Cobden to Joseph Sturge, 11 March 1850, 5 Apr. 1850 [2 pages]

Letter from Richard Cobden to John Bright, 18 Oct. 1850 [1 page]


*Geoffrey Drage, Eton and the Empire* (1890), pp. 17-18, 24-9, 40 [9 pages.]

Richard Temple, *India in 1880*, pp. 43-8, 122, 126, 385, 388-9, 392-5. [15 pages]


Henry Lucy, A diary of two parliaments. The Disraeli parliament, 1874-1880 (1885), pp. 198-9. [2 pages]

Samuel Laing, England’s foreign policy (1884), p. 30. [1 page]


Extracts from debate on vote of censure on Egypt and Sudan, Hansard, 294 cols. 1052-141 (23 February 1885). [2 pages]


Tenniel cartoon, ‘The British lion’s revenge on the Bengal tiger’, Punch 1857. [1 page]

[108 pages]

Secondary reading

Michael Bentley, Lord Salisbury’s world: conservative environments in Late-Victorian Britain (Cambridge, 2001), ch. 8.

*Graham Dawson, Soldier heroes: British adventure, empire and the imagining of masculinities (1994), ch. 4-5.

Bradley Deane, Masculinity and the new imperialism (Cambridge, 2014).

*Catherine Hall, ‘Going a-trolloping: imperial man travels the Empire’ in Clare Midgley, ed., Gender and imperialism (Manchester, 1998).


R. Hyam, Britain’s imperial century 1815-1914 (1976).

P. Levine, Gender and empire (2007), chapters by Hall, Levine and Hammerton.


*John Tosh, A man’s place: masculinity and the middle-class home (1998), ch. 8.

John Tosh, Manliness and masculinities in nineteenth-century Britain (2005), ch. 8-9.


14) Citizenship and enfranchisement

How far did debates about parliamentary reform between 1832 and 1900 rest on gendered assumptions about what made a good voter? This class will study these assumptions, including Chartist demands for the franchise, concerns about electoral violence, the debates about household suffrage in 1867 and the enfranchisement of agricultural labourers in 1884.


‘Morality of the working classes’, Chartist Circular (2 Nov. 1839), p. 22. [1 page]

‘Householders, lodgers, hutsters, and vagrants’ Northern Star, 2 January 1841, p. 4. [1 page]
Extracts from speech by Richard Cobden on National Representation: Hansard, 100, col. 183-95 (6 July 1848). [3 pages]
Speech by Rev. J. R. Stephens at Chartist meeting in Wigan, Northern Star 17 Nov. 1838, p. 6. [1 page]
Tenniel cartoon, ‘Cobden’s logic’, Punch 5 Dec. 1863. [1 page]
Tenniel Cartoon, ‘The schoolmaster of the future’, Punch [1 page]
Ernest Jones, ‘The measure of the middle classes’ (1859) and ‘Inaugural meeting of the Reform League’ (13 May 1865) in John Breuilly, Gottfried Niedhart and Anthony Taylor, eds., The era of the Reform League: English Labour and radical politics, 1857-1872. Documents selected by Gustav Mayer (Mannheim, 1995), pp. 139-42. [4 pages]
Speech by Lowe on reform HC Deb 13 March 1866 vol 182 cc141-64 [13 pages]
Extract from Sir Hugh Cairns’s speech on class representation: HC Deb 16 April 1866 vol 182 cc1462-75 [2 pages]
Sir Edward Watkin on respectable householders HC Deb 17 May 1867 vol 187 cc694-98 [2 pages]
Speech by John Bright on the residuum Hansard, 186, col. 626-42 (26 March 1867) [2 pages]
R.H. Hutton, ‘The political character of the working classes’ in Essays on Reform (1867), pp. 27-44. [18 pages]
Extract from speech by Thomas Chambers offering Liberal support for the principles of the 1867 Act: Hansard, 187, col. 744-5 (17 May 1867). [1 page]
On electoral violence Report from the select committee on parliamentary and municipal elections together with the proceedings of the committee, minutes of evidence and appendix, P.P. 1868-69, VIII, p. xvi-xviii, q. 4407-11; q. 5673-81 [2 pages].
Extract from speech by Edward Leatham on manliness and the ballot: Hansard, 207, col. 401-90 (22 June 1871). [3 pages]
Henry Cecil Raikes on enfranchisement of agricultural labourers: Hansard, 286, col. 897-904 (27 March 1884). [3 pages]
Extracts from speeches by Jesse Collings and John Barran on agricultural labourers and political education. Hansard, 286, col. 619-72 (24 March 1884); Hansard, 286, col. 1815-916 (7 April 1884). [1 page]
Gladstone’s speech on the masses against the classes, Liverpool 1886. [1 page]
Wilfrid Lawson on pauper disqualification Hansard, 2, col.1197-8 (18 March 1892). [1 page]
[98 pages]

Secondary reading

Anna Clark, The struggle for the breeches: gender and the making of the British working class (Berkeley, 1995).
Royden Harrison, Before the Socialists (1965).
15) Women's suffrage
The most obvious way in which the political system was gendered was the formal exclusion of women from the parliamentary franchise. How was this justified? How was it challenged? To what extent did arguments in favour of excluding women from the franchise draw on patterns of exclusion between men? What can studying debates about women’s suffrage tell us about Victorian masculinities?

Letter from Richard Cobden to Catherine Cobden, 26 Jan. 1846. [1 page]
‘Householders, lodgers, hutsters, and vagrants’ Northern Star, 2 January 1841, p. 4. [1 page]
Extracts from speech by Edward Leatham and Alexander Beresford Hope: Hansard, 215, col. 1194-258 (30 April 1873). [3 pages]
Speech by John Bright: Hansard, 228, col. 1730-41 (26 April 1876). [5 pages]
Speech by Charles Radcliffe Cooke: Hansard, 45, col. 1196-1201 (3 February 1897). [2 pages]
‘A Lady in the Gallery’ [Isabella Tod], ‘A letter to the Rt Hon John Bright, MP’ (1876). [7 pages]
Millicent Garrett Fawcett, ‘Electoral disabilities of women’ (1871). [17 pages]
Selection of cartoons. [3 pages]
[111 pages]

Secondary reading
*B. Harrison, *Separate spheres: the opposition to women’s suffrage in Britain* (1978)
Angela John and Claire Eustance, eds., *The men’s share? masculinities, male support and women’s suffrage in Britain, 1890-1920* (1997).
Sandra Stanley Holton ‘Now you see it, now you don’t: the Women’s Franchise League and its place in contending narratives of the women’s suffrage movement’ in Maroula Joannou and June Purvis, eds., *The women’s suffrage movement: new feminist perspectives*, (Manchester, 1998), pp. 15-36.
Sarah Richardson, *The political worlds of women* (2013).

16) Remaking working-class masculinities

Victorian Liberalism was characterised by a tremendous confidence in the capacity of the state to “improve” the morals of the poor, and a particular concern was to improve the behaviour of working-class men. How was this expected to work? Which aspects of working-class masculinities were identified as problematic and in need of reform? How far were anxieties about working-class masculinities reflecting anxieties about upper-class men?

Thomas Wright, *The great unwashed* (1868), ch. 1 ‘working men’ [27 pages]
*Special report from the select committee on the Married Women’s Property Bill, Parliamentary Papers* [hereafter P.P], 1867-68, VII, pp. 61-4, 70-71. [6 pages]
Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), ch. 10 [15 pages]
[117 pages]

Secondary reading


Write an essay of **not less than** 6,000 words and **not more than** 7,000 words on one of the following questions.

1. What does the study of male workplace culture reveal about working-class politics in the nineteenth century?

2. In terms of their political significance, were the similarities between workingmen’s clubs and gentlemen’s clubs more pronounced than the differences?

3. What does the study of sex scandals reveal about radical politics in the nineteenth century?

4. Discuss the impact of ageing on the careers of **any two** Victorian politicians.

5. What were the consequences of the mid-century cult of ‘manliness’ for political leadership?

6. ‘The contempt that middle-class politicians felt for aristocratic masculinities was matched by the contempt that aristocratic men felt for middle-class masculinities.’ Discuss.

7. What effects did conceptions of male honour have on elite politics in Victorian Britain?

8. What part did conceptions of heroism play in the politics of Victorian imperialism?

9. How far did arguments in favour of retaining the male monopoly of the parliamentary franchise change between 1867 and the end of the century?

10. By what means did the Victorian state attempt to reform the behaviour of working-class husbands?
HST2
HISTORICAL TRIPOS Part II

Monday 1 June 2015 9 to 12

Special Historical Subject
MASCULINITIES AND POLITICAL CULTURE IN BRITAIN, 1832-1901

Answer questions 1, 2, and one other question.

1. Comment on three of the following:

a) From Eton, and other establishments of the same class, are continually sent forth those who have either a seat by descent, in the higher legislative assembly of the land, or from their birth, weight, influence, or opulence, have fair pretensions to become members of the Lower House. The university may give the ultimate bias, and stamp the last colouring upon the character of the young noble or country gentleman – but that character has been already half formed – the talents developed, the tastes implanted, the habits of application or indolence, of generous ambition or Sybaritic coxcombery, the love of intellectual occupation, or the degrading passion for coarser pursuits, have been strongly riveted upon the mind and moral being during the earlier period of school instruction. But in the present times, the aristocracy of birth and wealth must likewise be an aristocracy of intelligence, talent, and information, or it will be in danger of losing its pre-eminence.


b) So I mean to jot down some contributions towards the definition of this character [the gentleman]. ... We must start, then, by disencumbering ourselves of things external merely – rank, wealth, power, show – all the mere settings of the stone. And further, of things also which, though undeniably advantages and adornments, are yet not of the essence of this character ... High breeding; liberal education; familiarity with the ways of the best society; polished behaviour; easy manners; experience of books, and men, and countries; absence of shyness; an acquaintance with what is not mere littleness in etiquette: – these may be the cutting of the jewel. Yet, though many of them will be assumed in this sketch, let it be declared at the outset that the jewel can exist without them.

[J. R. VERNON, ‘The grand old name of gentleman’, 1869]

c) The conversation at Holland House turning on the custom, exclusively English, for the ladies to leave the dinner-table before the gentlemen, Talleyrand remarked to Lord Aberdeen that this custom had exercised an important influence on our national character, by giving the men an opportunity of discussing political questions and making them less frivolous. ... Lady Holland stoutly contended that, in French and other foreign society, where the practice was unknown, the women rose to the male level instead of dragging the men down to the female; to which the ready answer was that the male level was there lower, and that, if French women talked better politics, French men (speaking generally) talked worse.

[ABRAHAM HAYWARD, ‘Clubs’, 1866]
d) Palmerston, always enterprising and audacious with women, took a fancy to Mrs Brande (now Lady Dacre), and at Windsor Castle, when she was in waiting and he was a guest, he marched into her room one night. His tender temerity met with an invincible resistance. The Lady did not conceal the attempt and it came to the Queen’s ears. Her indignation was somehow pacified by Melbourne, then all powerful … Palmerston got out of the scrape with his usual luck; but the Queen has never forgotten and will never forgive it.

CHARLES GREVILLE, Memoirs, 1853

---

e) Mr Kavanagh, though thus imperfectly formed, is not so helpless as might be imagined. By a simple piece of mechanism attached to the wheels of his chair, he can propel it at great speed and turn it about with ease. He can also write legibly and swiftly. He performs this feat in a curious manner. He puts into his mouth the top end of his pen, presses it lower down with his stumps, with which he guides it, and makes it fly across the paper with surprising swiftness. … He hunts, too, and goes across the country as well as the best man in the field. We have heard that he shoots; but surely this is a fable. We would not, though, positively say it is; for Mr Kavanagh is evidently an ingenious man, and can himself suggest mechanical contrivances. Moreover, he is very rich, and can command all the skill in mechanism which money may buy. He speaks in the House uncommonly well. His language is plain, simple, and effective; and his voice is, strong, clear, and distinct. Nor is the matter of his speech unworthy of notice.

WILLIAM WHITE, The inner life of the House of Commons, 1870

---

2. Comment on three of the following:

a) Absurd as the statement may appear to the practical public outside the House, it is nevertheless true that if Forster would brush his hair, would refrain from buying ready-made clothing that never fits him, would not sprawl in his seat, would keep his knees quiet when he is speaking, and would abstain from unseasonable chuckling when he refers to “my honourable friend,” or to “the noble lord opposite,” his chances of having a right to sit in the seat out of which he, towards the end of last session, literally elbow his unassuming leader, would be nearly doubled.

HENRY LUCY, A diary of two parliaments: the Disraeli parliament, 1880
c) To bring in the young, the active, the intelligent, the enthusiastic, to bind them to the cause of Religion, Order, Constitutional Liberty; ... to argue, to persuade, to speak, to write, to spend, to be spent; to think no labour too heavy, no work too insignificant; ... to lay aside each besetting temptation; to sacrifice accustomed occupations, the pleasant plans of hunting, shooting, visiting, travelling; the well-earned holiday, even the habits of a life-time – this is the real duty of the moment ... The country gentlemen of England have inherited their station and its trusts, they can best discharge its duties in the interests of the Nation, and not a class; and they would indeed be “niddering,” as their Saxon ancestors would have said, if they resigned their leadership for love of ease or fear of labour.

[H. H. Herbert, ‘A word to country gentlemen by one of themselves’, 1885]

d) [In 1881 Sir William Harcourt imputed cowardice to Parnell] ‘which aroused the anger of O’Gorman Mahon ... He belonged ... to that generation of Irishmen in which the duel was a common episode of political difference, and such an affront in the gospel of his day ... could only be met by a duel to the death. ... [He] passed by any preliminary discussion as to whether a duel was necessary or not, and entered at once on those preliminaries for such an encounter with which his experience had made him familiar – as, for instance, where the duel was to take place, who were to be Parnell’s seconds, etc. etc. We all
listened silently until Parnell spoke; and then he announced that he did not intend to issue a challenge, he did not believe in the duel.
I will never forget the look of dismay and astonishment that passed over the leonine face of the old duellist; he was simply dumb with surprise, and even disgust.

[T. P. O’CONNOR, Memoirs of an old parliamentarian, 1929]

e) He ventured to lay down this proposition – that the industrious working man who sought to obtain a decent dwelling in which to bring up his family in comfort was fit to be placed in possession of the franchise; but that the man who, either from intemperate habits, want of industry, or any other cause, had neither the ambition nor the power to secure for his family a decent dwelling in which his children could be brought up with some approach to comfort, was not fit to have the franchise given to him, but belonged to the residuum.

[EDWARD WATKIN, MP, 1867]

How useful are Victorian biographies of politicians for historians of gender?

3. How far did working-class and upper-class masculinities follow different trajectories in the Victorian period?