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Propaganda discourse in an imperial setting: The case of Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria*¹

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ABSTRACT

Between 1870 and 1945 imperial regimes expanded, causing a redefinition in the territory of their empires; this reconfiguration of geo-political as well as cultural space was supported by the production of texts, which contributed to the dissemination of the main tenets of colonial ideology. England was at the centre of modern imperial history as it established a specific space policy that was based on the dichotomy 'home/far from' which emphasised the relationship between metropolis, a dynamic centre of innovation, and colony, the receiver of the benefits of 'civilisation', and was based on racial difference (Ballantyne – Burton 2012). This paper deals with propaganda discourse by focussing on the case of Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* (1921). Despite Strachey's distance from extreme militarism and hero-worship of the Victorian era, this successful text contributed to the construction of the British Empire cultural formation. The paper will adopt a corpus assisted analysis to illustrate how specific keywords and expressions in Strachey's work relate to the British imperial propaganda discourse based on white superiority. Lastly, it will also focus on how Strachey's depiction of Victoria's changing political status from Princess to Empress of India can be inserted into the larger framework of imperial propaganda discourse.

Keywords: British empire, India, Queen Victoria, imperialism, propaganda.

1. Introduction

Between 1870 and 1945 imperial regimes expanded, causing a redefinition in the territory of their empires; this reconfiguration of geo-political as well as cultural space was supported by the production of texts, which

¹ Although the authors worked closely on the preparation of this paper, Gabriella Del Lungo is responsible for the Introduction (Section 1) and Concluding Remarks (Section 7), whereas Sabrina Cappelli is responsible for Sections 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

contributed to the dissemination of the main tenets of the imperial ideology. England was at the centre of the modern imperial history as it established a specific space policy that was based on the dichotomy “home/far from” which emphasised the relationship between metropolis, a dynamic centre of innovation, and colony, the receiver of the benefits of “civilization”, and was essentially based on racial difference (Ballantyne – Burton 2012). As observed by Hobsbawm (2014: 31), the world was divided into smaller parts of developed countries, where “progress”, based on industrial society and technology, was indigenous and another larger part of backward countries in which it came as a foreign conqueror, assisted by minorities of local collaborators. The British certainly understood their empire hierarchically, in racial terms of superiority and inferiority. According to Metcalf (1995), the British sought to legitimate their rule of India emphasising a colonial view of India based on differences. However, as indicated by Cannadine (2001), their perception was not only based on notions of metropolitan-periphery analogy, but of sameness too, as they saw other people also as a formation of individuals who could be compared based on status similarity. This led to the recognition of equal social status – princes are princes everywhere – and formed the basis of the fully elaborate Raj in India.

The distinction between the two sectors of the world was not only geopolitical, but also cultural, as the ideology of the period mostly relied on white civilization superiority. The stereotype that imperial periphery was different from and inferior to the imperial metropolis was a common perception in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, as it was disseminated by various forms of popular propaganda such as spectacular ceremonies and exotic villages in exhibitions. Literature also contributed to disseminate imperial ideology and to construct a divided worldview opposing the two hemispheres, east/west. Perhaps the most influential writer to disseminate the idea of white civilisation superiority was Kipling. In his work, the empire assumed a complex mythical or legendary function, which he passed on to his readers. Others were fascinated by Indian extravaganza and, thanks largely to Disraeli, the British monarchy was shaped as an imperial crown of unprecedented grandeur. The construction of the cultural formation of the British empire was in no small part attained by identifying the empire with the English queen, Victoria, as the imperial period corresponds roughly, though not exactly, to the period of Queen Victoria’s reign (1837-1901).

MacKenzie (1990: 2) identifies an ideological cluster which formed out the intellectual, national, and world-wide conditions of the imperialism of the later Victorian era, and which came to be propagated by every organ of British life in the period. It was made up of militarism, a devotion to royalty

and worship of national heroes. Reverence for the monarchy developed only from the late 1870s and it was closely bound up with the monarch's, that is Victoria's, imperial role.

The successful biography by Lytton Strachey, *Queen Victoria*, contributed to the construction of the cultural formation of the imperial monarchy. Born in 1880 and later educated in Cambridge, he stands amongst the founders of the Bloomsbury Group, a collective known for its *avant-garde* approach regarding literature, art and philosophy. During his time at Cambridge, he closely associated with several future voices of Modernism such as Clive Bell, Leonard Woolf, Virginia Stephen (later Woolf) and Saxon Sydney-Turner. Strachey's personal relationships with the other Bloomsbury members would also often intertwine with his professional career as an acclaimed writer and critic. His biographies often adopted a critical outlook regarding the characters of their subjects. Such an approach based on irony and wit contrasts with the traditional reverent approach typical of earlier biographies. Strachey's distinctive style focused on the inner lives of the subjects, revealing their complexity of character and flaws.

Being an anti-conscriptionist and conscientious objector, Strachey wrote as a social critic of evangelicalism (Avery 2010: 841) and he stood in sharp contrast with the imperialist propaganda of the late Victorian era. However, in *Queen Victoria* Strachey focuses on the transformation of Victoria's character from a young princess to a petulant widow and an imperial matriarch. As he writes, her world-wide role of Empress provided her with excitement in her old age and a new significance to the ceremonial events that surrounded her.

The Queen established a particular relationship with the Indian dominion as she was strongly attracted by India and inclined to be very protective towards her Indian subjects and took her duties as Empress very seriously. The reign of queen Victoria was the heyday of the British Empire, a period of profound changes in British society, of the industrial revolution and the Great exhibition, but also permeated by a rigid morality whose emblem was the royal family. In his biography of Queen Victoria, Lytton Strachey constructs her life describing the virtues and the frailty of a female monarch without any sentimentalism, but rather through a witty and critical use of irony.

Most research on *Queen Victoria* is historical or ideological, as mentioned above, whereas there is a paucity of linguistic analyses of the work. Therefore, in order to analyse the language used by Strachey in his biography, a corpus – *Queen Victoria Biography* (QVB) – was created. The

approach adopted to analyse the imperialist propaganda discourse in the QVB is corpus assisted while addressing the following research questions:

- 1) Which keywords encode propaganda in QVB?
- 2) Which clusters are related to place and white British superiority?
- 3) How does Victoria's changing status relate to imperial propaganda discourse?

Section 2 focuses on biographies in Strachey's time whereas section 3 on propaganda. Section 4 describes the corpus and methodology adopted which is followed by data analysis, in section 5, and by the data discussion in section 6. Section 7 provides concluding remarks.

2. The evolution of biographies

Lytton Strachey was one of the pioneers of a great shift in the approach to biography literature. Hutch (1988: 3) states that there are two main distinguished approaches employed by biographers. The first is known as *unidimensional biography*, which is characterised by biographical stereotyping, aiming to locate the single most motivational value of a subject. In other words, such biographies were often written to idealize and display the moral virtues of the individual in question by presenting the lives of their subjects as examples of moral integrity. It is here that the concept of hero-worshipping is prevalent. Such a concept possessed great flexibility and obscurity (Hutch 1988) as there was a general agreement that the nation would benefit from worshipping great individuals, although there was no consensus on who they were. According to Atkinson (2010: 4), the terms *great* and *hero* were often used interchangeably, bringing further confusion to the whole idea. Such fuzziness was also provided by the naïve association between greatness and goodness while writers struggled to reconcile the two in morally ambiguous public characters. Such associations and hagiographic approaches were directly charged with imperialist propaganda, which typifies the Victorian period.

The second approach, known as *new biographers*, is based on writers' interest in the hidden lives of individuals whose personality was placed at the heart of their narrative. In contrast, Strachey chose to focus on famous characters, thus laying the foundation for the *multidimensional biography* approach in direct contrast with the Victorian *unidimensional biography*. As to this point, Ankersmit (2001) operates a distinction between description and representation. While description illustrates the truth, representation

provides a scope that is relevant to a certain context. Thus, accuracy does not necessarily provide the best representation which enables understanding more than the mere exposure to bare truth. However, in a multidimensional biography, the representation of a personality does not diminish the accuracy of a text, instead, it is considered a necessity to achieve truthfulness.

Personality became, then, the main point of the new biographers. While they did not believe that extraordinary deeds can explain a life (Thirriard 2021: 5), they assigned anecdotes a central role in revealing one's personality. It was believed that they revealed the individual's character in selective traits. As a consequence, anecdotes became the focal part of the narrative structure, as can be observed in Strachey's most famous works.

In his biographies, Strachey both created and destroyed the character of his subjects, as he did not only experiment with biographical formalities and styles, but also with reputation and how it could be deployed (Southern 2016). Thus, portraits resulting from previous modelling were critically dissected, as deconstruction was considered a tool to establish a relationship between the biographer and his/her subject (Hutch 1988: 6), and to draw away from the Victorian notion of hero-worship with its consequent moralistic image of the self. By furthermore being influenced by Freud's work, Strachey believed the individual to be constantly entangled in the inner conflicts of personality, which may be seen as the defining factor in establishing a new school of biography that would continue throughout the 20th century (Thirriard 2021).

3. Persuasive devices and propaganda discourse

MacKenzie (1990: 3) states that propaganda can be defined as the transmission of ideas and values from one person, or groups of persons, to another with the specific intention of influencing the recipient attitudes in such a way that the interests of its authors will be enhanced. Additionally, Zečić (2022) stresses how manipulation involves abuse of power and domination. Those who are being manipulated often do not perceive the process that is being enacted through the primary function of language, which is ideological framing. Hence, manipulation is a subtle tool of propaganda, affecting the subconscious sphere of the individual to correct their existing view of the world. For Karamova et al. (2019), it should be evaluated in terms of an implicit speech influence on the addressee's subconscious. However, while consciousness is individual, the subconscious sphere is affected by manipulation and has more

of a collective connotation (Karamova et al. 2019) which was attained not only by newspapers but also by biographers like Strachey.

To be most effective, propaganda necessitates the use of persuasive devices. According to Zečić (2022), persuasive discourse focuses on the recipients by providing them with information that is to be understood and, most importantly, that serves the interests of such recipients. By contrast, propaganda is a systematic and deliberate attempt to shape the perception of reality, while redirecting the behaviour of the individual to achieve a response that furthers the propagandist's own interests.

As to the linguistic rhetorical devices implemented, metaphors can contribute to the creation of a stereotypical and one-sided vision of a specific subject. Grammatical structures can also be used for persuasive purposes as, for instance, pronouns such as *we* and *ours* promote a sense of involvement, solidarity, and collectivism. Repetition can accompany the pronoun use to create a cohesive pattern and further stress the parts that the deliverer wants the addressee to focus on (Karamova et al. 2019). In addition, passive constructions can be employed to either alienate the achievements of opponents, or to distance one-self from the expressed opinion. In doing so, an individual may promote the removal of responsibility for what has been previously stated. In addition, nominalisation can be adopted to construct a positive image of one-self, while still negatively framing the adversary's actions. Karamova et al. (2019) identify the following main persuasive strategies that can be implemented through the methods described above: implication / reduction / distance from the expressed opinion / contact with the addressee.

Implication and reduction are accomplished using metaphors, passive structures, nominalization, and indefinite personal construction with common semantics of alienation. In the case of implication, presuppositions are also frequently employed. Indeed, the assertion is presented under the guise of presupposition, which does not require evidence to be considered true by the addressee. Furthermore, to establish distance from the expressed opinion, individuals often exploit structures that carry nominalizations with a general meaning of denying responsibilities for what is perceived as a necessary action. Lastly, contact with the addressee is achieved through a positive marked evaluative vocabulary designed to arouse the attention and trust of the addressee. Such a trust is then exploited by representatives of specific ideologies (Karamova et al. 2019). Appeals to the addressee are also launched quite often to impress the idea that they are part of the solution of a serious and impending issue (often political). Therefore, all these factors create a collective mentality where the individual does not

think to be separate from a group of peers. Instead, the individual acts in the name of the group, whose components, in turn, often become active in spreading propaganda themselves.

4. Corpus and methodology

To analyse the language of imperial propaganda discourse in Strachey's *Queen Victoria*, a small corpus – *Queen Victoria's Biography* (QVB) – of 88,411 words was compiled by downloading *Queen Victoria* in a .txt format from the website *The Internet Archive*. The corpus was subsequently divided into different .txt files, one for each chapter of Strachey's *Queen Victoria*. The software used to analyse QVB is *Lancsbox 6.0* (Brezina – Weill-Tessier – McEnergy 2020).

The tools employed to analyse the data were Words, KWic, GraphColl, Text and Ngrams. Words generated a list of the most frequent keywords by comparing QVB with The British National Corpus included in *Lancsbox 6.0*. According to Stefanowitsch (2020), collocations are a quantitative phenomenon and to ask whether two words form a collocation, is essentially equivalent to asking whether one of those words occurs more frequently in a given position than one would expect by chance. These phraseological distributions assume that words do not operate as isolated elements but can rather be considered as larger units of meaning (Sinclair 1996). GraphColl was used to visualise the collocations of the chosen keywords while Text allowed an in-depth insight into the context in which a word or phrase is employed, and it was used to perform close readings of the collocations and to extract relevant examples. Lastly, Ngrams was employed to search for clusters and their construction of imperial propaganda discourse which was then analysed qualitatively.

The methodology adopted is Partington's (2008) Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) which uses the corpus for replicable quantitative techniques and employs the resulting data as a point of departure for a qualitative analysis of imperial propaganda discourse, in this case. The analysis was initiated after choosing a list of relevant keywords which refer to Victoria and imperial propaganda, more specifically *empire, British, civilised, India, colonies/ial, Princess Victoria, Queen Victoria, Victoria, empress*. The collocations and concordances of the chosen keywords were then analysed to identify how they encode imperial discourse and how they are used to convey Victoria's changing status within propaganda discourse.

5. Data analysis

5.1 Queen Victoria biography and the notion of empire

Table 1 indicates the most frequent collocations of the keyword *empire* which appears recurrently related to vastness and celestial, thus recalling a context of greatness of the English empire. This further emerges in Table 2, wherein *empire* is used to communicate its sheer physical force and power as shown in its concordances.

Table 1. GraphColl collocation of *empire*

| Collocate | Rank | Freq. (scaled) | Freq.LR | Freq.L | Freq. R | Range | Likelihood | Effect |
|----------------|------|----------------|---------|--------|---------|-------|------------|--------|
| vastness | 1 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 14.116 | 11.526 |
| sway | 2 | 20 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 12.678 | 10.526 |
| celestial | 2 | 20 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 12.678 | 10.526 |
| representative | 4 | 30 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 11.850 | 9.941 |
| thank | 5 | 40 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 11.267 | 9.526 |
| flew | 6 | 50 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 10.816 | 9.204 |
| message | 7 | 60 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 10.449 | 8.941 |

Table 2. KWIC results for *empire*

| | | | |
|--|---|--------|--|
| Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt | powerful Sovereign on her imperial sway, the vastness of her | Empire | and the success and strength of her fleets and |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | and over again. That night her message flew over the | Empire | From my heart I thank my beloved people. May |
| Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt | orders were given that, as no representative of the Celestial | Empire | was present, he should be included in the diplomatic |

Strachey's connection to British exceptionalism can already be observed in Table 1 and Table 2. Geographical vastness is inferred in Table 2 with the preposition *over* conveying movement along a large surface. Additionally, the keyword *empire* is linked to military strength, as can be observed in Table 2 when referring to the success of the fleets. Interestingly, the collocate *celestial* that appears in Table 1, does not refer to the superiority of the British

Empire but it is rather an adjective referring to the Chinese Empire. However, after a close reading of such passages in Strachey's book, it is still possible to identify an underlying sentiment of superiority over the Chinese people since, for instance, the representative of the *Celestial Empire* is described as having an *impassive yellow face*. A passage claiming that such an envoy was an imposter is also present, although Strachey himself seems to discredit the accusation by defining it as *rumours amongst ill-natured people*. Additionally, as shown in the lines below, Strachey hints at Victoria's fascination towards China through the adjective *eminent* and much *impressed*. Such an interest foreshadows what would then become an almost obsessive Orientalist interest towards India based not on genuine respect, as seen in the veiled disparaging comments referred to the Chinese diplomat, but on a desire to appropriate and integrate the East in the "superior" British empire:

- (1) At that moment a Chinaman, dressed in full national costume, stepped out into the middle of the central nave, and, advancing slowly towards the royal group, did obeisance to Her Majesty. The Queen, much impressed, had no doubt that he was an eminent mandarin; and, when the final procession was formed, orders were given that, as no representative of the Celestial Empire was present, he should be included in the diplomatic cortege. He accordingly, with the utmost gravity, followed immediately behind the Ambassadors. He subsequently disappeared, and it was rumoured, among ill-natured people, that, far from being a mandarin, the fellow was a mere imposter. But nobody ever really discovered the nature of the comments that had been lurking behind the matchless impassivity of that yellow face (127-128).

These theories would be in accordance with MacKenzie (1990) claiming that popular British imperialism became a stronger, and not a weaker force, during Edwardian and immediate post-Edwardian society. British exceptionalism was still prevalent in Strachey's *Queen Victoria* partly through the association of the keyword empire with vastness, strength and greatness, thus confirming that *empire* had a crucial role in conveying a propagandistic discourse.

Another manifestation of British exceptionalism can be observed in Table 3 and Table 4, displaying the collocates for the keyword *British* and its concordances. While the collocates and concordances indicated in Table 1 and Table 2 are linked to the perceived greatness and superiority of the British

with the concept of vastness, the term *British* itself in Table 3 and Table 4 is connected to the semantic sphere of laws and legislatures. As indicated in Table 3, the first most frequent collocate is *constitution*. Such a link seems to underline British superiority in terms of legislative and political power which seems to legitimise the British dominion over the colonies. Hence, the keyword *British* can be considered part of the empire propaganda discourse.

Table 3. GraphColl collocation results for *British*

| Collocate | Rank | Freq. (scaled) | Freq.R | Freq.L | Freq.R | Rank | Likelihood | Effect |
|--------------|------|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|------|------------|--------|
| constitution | 1 | 220 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 22.935 | 6.914 |
| pacifico | 2 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |
| broadside | 2 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |
| comprehend | 2 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |
| gallery | 2 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |

Table 4. KWIC results for *British*

| | | | |
|--|--|---------|---|
| Lord_Palmerston_ Queen_Victoria.txt | affairs of France. Nevertheless, in an official despatch to the | British | Ambassador in Paris, he repeated the approval of the |
| Last_Years_Of_ Prince_Consort_ Queen_Victoria.txt | to the Royal Agricultural Society, and attended meetings of the | British | Association. The National Gallery particularly interested him: he drew |
| Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt | YOUR SPIRIT; now that slavery is even abolished in the | British | Colonies, I do not comprehend WHY YOUR LOT ALONE |
| Lord_Melbourne_ Queen_Victoria.txt | criticise books, throw out a remark or two on the | British | Constitution, make some passing reflections on human life, and |
| Gladstone_And_ Lord_Beaconsfield_ Queen_Victoria.txt | sacrosanct embodiment of venerable traditions – a vital element in the | British | Constitution – a Queen by Act of Parliament. But unfortunately |
| Marriage_Queen_ Victoria.txt | A queen's husband was an entity unknown to the | British | Constitution. In State affairs there seemed to be no |
| Old_Age_Queen_ Victoria.txt | allowed her mind to develop. Under Disraeli's tutelage the | British | Dominions over the seas had come to mean much |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---------|---|
| Lord_Palmerston_Queen_Victoria.txt | night-cap." From Lovely Albert! a broadside preserved at the | British | Museum. In January, 1854, it was whispered that the Prince |
| Lord_Melbourne_Queen_Victoria.txt | enterprise,' he said. Canada was then entirely French, and the | British | only came afterwards... Lord M. explained this very clearly |
| Lord_Palmerston_Queen_Victoria.txt | s diplomacy; and when his support of Don Pacifico, a | British | subject, in a quarrel with the Greek Government, seemed |

In Table 5 and Table 6 the keyword *civilised* collocates with *corner*, *efforts* and *world*, thus carrying a positive connotation; however, it would be legitimate to assume that the opposite term *uncivilised* would carry a negative meaning. As claimed by Ballantyne – Burton (2012), the difference between what and who was considered civilised or uncivilised was based on racial characteristics, in which the British assumed for themselves the role of those who would export civilisation and decide who was worthy of such a privilege. The collocation *civilised world* then perfectly fits within the imperial white superiority propaganda, common not only in the Victorian era but also in Strachey's own time. Therefore, once again, despite his anti-militaristic views, Strachey reiterates and confirms the Victorian imperialist view that identified Britain's role as an exporter of progress and civilisation towards territories far from the metropolis and belonging to the colonies which were perceived to be uncivilised.

Table 5. GraphColl collocation results for *civilised*

| Collocate | Rank | Freq. (scaled) | Freq.LR | Freq.L | Freq.R | Rank | Likelihood | Effect |
|-----------|------|----------------|---------|--------|--------|------|------------|--------|
| corner | 1 | 30 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 14.116 | 11.526 |
| efforts | 2 | 90 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.897 | 9.941 |
| world | 3 | 360 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 9.122 | 7.941 |

Table 6. KWic results for *civilised*

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|-----------|--|
| Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt | speeches, and carried on communications with every corner of the | civilised | world – and his efforts were rewarded. On May 1, 1851, the |
|-----------------------------|--|-----------|--|

However, Strachey also romanticised his and Victoria's view of the colonies by filtering their perception under the grandeur of British rule, as can be observed in the following instance in the text:

- (2) She swelled with a new wonderful elation, while he, conjuring up before her Oriental visions, dazzled her eyes with an imperial grandeur of which she had only dimly dreamed (224).

Such a role can be observed clearly in the infantilization of the Indian philosophy and school of thought, which was not only common in Strachey's time, but would also continue beyond it (Gibson 2014).

As shown in Table 7 and Table 8, the keyword *colonies* collocates most frequently with professional, servitude, abolishes, punishment and Indian while suggesting a clear sense of authority and possession over the colonies. This is further foregrounded in the KWiC concordances which indicate a close link between the colonies and London and/or the proximity between the leading English manufacturers and the East India Company in the colony.

Table 7. GraphColl collocation results for colonies/colonial

| Collocate | Rank | Freq. (scaled) | Freq.LR | Freq.L | Freq.R | Range | Likelihood | Effect |
|--------------|------|-------------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------------|--------|
| professional | 1 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 13.081 | 10.789 |
| servitude | 1 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 13.081 | 10.789 |
| comprehend | 1 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 13.081 | 10.789 |
| sibthorpe | 1 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 13.081 | 10.789 |
| debate | 5 | 20 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.643 | 9.789 |
| abolished | 6 | 30 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 10.816 | 9.204 |
| punishment | 6 | 30 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 10.816 | 9.204 |
| indians | 6 | 30 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 10.816 | 9.204 |

Table 8. KWiC results for colonies/colonial

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------|---|
| Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt | the very long period of my professional servitude in the | Colonies; | and if this is not attainable, IT IS A |
| Old_Age_Queen_ Victoria.txt | and surpassed. In London, she opened in high state the | Colonial | and Indian Exhibition at South Kensington. On this occasion |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--|-----------|--|
| Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt | smoothly. The leading manufacturers warmly took up the idea; the | colonies | and the East India Company were sympathetic; the great |
| Childhood_Queen_Victoria.txt | SPIRIT; now that slavery is even abolished in the British | Colonies, | I do not comprehend WHY YOUR LOT ALONE SHOULD |

The concordances confirm the submission of the colonies to the white “superior” motherland while Strachey, on the one hand, distanced himself from Victorian hero-worship and militarism through humanizing and critical descriptions of character flaws and political campaigns, but on the other, he was still susceptible to the belief of British superiority which he contributed to spread. Such a theory can also be observed in the following instances extracted from the text:

- (3) If Victoria had died in the early seventies, there can be little doubt that the voice of the world would have pronounced her a failure. [...] But she was reserved for a very different fate (219).

Here Strachey acknowledges Victoria’s failures also attributed in a wider contest of England’s instability due to military crisis, however he immediately proceeds to overturn the expectations of the reader by contrasting the anticipation of a glorious future in line with the Edwardian imperialism propaganda. His belief in British superiority and portrayal of Orientalism can, instead, be clearly observed in the next extract describing Victoria’s fascination with the “East”:

- (4) [...] imperialism was the dominant creed of the country. It was Victoria’s as well. [...] Under Disraeli’s tutelage the British Dominions over the seas had come to mean much more to her than ever before, and, in particular, she had grown enamoured of the East. The thought of India fascinated her; she set to, and learnt a little Hindustani; she engaged some Indian servants, who became her inseparable attendants, and one of whom, Munshi Abdul Karim, eventually almost succeeded to the position which had once been John Brown’s (262).

Strachey identifies imperialism not only with the Country’s beliefs but also directly with Victoria’s. The fascination that Strachey portrays through words such as “enamoured” however is always to be viewed in a context of inferiority and subordination to England’s rule and Victoria’s power.

Indeed, her curiosity and interest for the exotic appear to be frivolous and limited to extent that seemed necessary to enhance her perceived grandeur and prestige, as can be observed by Strachey's stressing the employment of Indian servants, highlighting once again the position of servitude that India had towards England.

This conclusion matches the canons of Edwardian imperialism founded on white superiority that spread through the empire and was aided by several imperial propaganda civilian societies. One of these was known as The Victoria league. Riedi (2002) claims that the Victoria league was much more successful in their propaganda by restricting their actions to include only "practical" work in areas that could be seen as a legitimate extension of the 'domestic sphere' that Victorian ideology granted to women. However, such a league had difficulties in incorporating India in their vision of the empire (Riedi 2002: 594). Indeed, imperialist propaganda based on white superiority was strongly against allowing Indian men to integrate within English society due to a perceived risk of sexual violence (Riedi 2002: 596). Therefore, the orientalist's fascination with India was to be kept separate and physically distant from England which was supposed to control India while not allowing any integration or unification.

Such a concept of separation and distance is found in Strachey's *Queen Victoria* that portrayed the monarch as a matriarch ruling over the empire and India as an extension of domestic duties. An instance of this kind of effort can be observed in the following extract, in which Strachey clearly emphasises Victoria's role as that of a Queen who is also mother to her people:

- (5) 'Noble fellows!' she wrote to the King of the Belgians 'I own I feel as if these were my own children; my heart beats for them as for my nearest and dearest.' (172).

In doing so, Strachey's male and female readership alike could identify and support the extension of Victoria's domestic identity, which was also constructed through anecdotes of her daily life, especially once married to Albert, as shown in the following extract:

- (6) When, in wrath, the Prince one day had locked himself into his room, Victoria, no less furious, knocked on the door to be admitted 'Who is there?' he asked. 'The Queen of England,' was the answer. He did not move, and again there was a hail of knocks. The question and the answer were repeated many times; but at last there was a pause, and then a gentler knocking. 'Who is there?' came once more the

relentless question. But this time the reply was different. ‘Your wife, Albert.’ And the door was immediately opened (102).

Strachey draws a clear parallel between Victoria’s role as a Queen and her role as a wife. Additionally, he also humanizes her by depicting a common emotion such as fury and by narrating a matrimonial quarrel with her husband, an episode that many of her subject would have experienced and thus been able to identify with, thus distancing himself from the hero-worshipping typical of the earlier Victorian biographers. Furthermore, the quarrel is solved once Victoria recognizes her role as a wife, thus highlighting her domestic virtue and diligence to her duties.

Hence, as shown in Tables 9 and 10, India is viewed as an extension of the home-motherland, thus as an entity to be dominated even by a woman such as Queen Victoria. In Table 9, the first collocates for the keyword *India* is *empress*, referring to Victoria as *Empress of India*. This collocation forms a concordance that not only can be considered related to white British superiority but can also be considered a starting point in the analysis regarding Victoria’s changing status and imperial propaganda.

Table 9. GraphColl collocation results for *India*

| Collocate | Rank | Freq. (scaled) | Freq.LR | Freq.L | Freq.R | Range | Likelihood | Effect |
|----------------|------|----------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------------|--------|
| empress | 1 | 100 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 30.807 | 8.789 |
| east | 2 | 50 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 21.673 | 9.204 |
| the | 3 | 60360 | 13 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 13.729 | 1.667 |
| quintessential | 4 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 12.713 | 10.526 |
| pivot | 4 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 12.713 | 10.526 |
| fascinated | 6 | 20 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.276 | 9.526 |
| colonies | 7 | 30 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 10.449 | 8.941 |
| perturbed | 7 | 30 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 10.449 | 8.941 |
| usually | 7 | 30 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 10.449 | 8.941 |

Table 10. KWIC results for *India*

| | | | |
|--|--|--------|---|
| Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt | Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for | India, | was much perturbed. But the Faery was |
| Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt | England ought to become the Empress of | India. | Victoria seized upon the idea with avidity, |

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------|---|
| Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt | to dine with the new Empress of | India. | That night the Faery, usually so homely |
| Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt | the idea; the colonies and the East | India | Company were sympathetic; the great foreign nations |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | enamoured of the East. The thought of | India | fascinated her; she set to, and learnt |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | the Queen of England, the Empress of | India, | the quintessential pivot round which the whole |

5.2 Queen Victoria biography and titles of power

Strachey's frequent use of titles of power emerges in the Ngram results in Table 11, in which the concordances relate to the political titles and positions of power regarding the evolution of Victoria and her consort's status and the Parliament. This appears also in Table 12 and Table 13.

Table 11. Results for the Ngram tool

| Type | Rank | Freq. | Range |
|-------------------------------|------|-------|-------|
| in the house of commons | 1 | 11 | 5 |
| the queen and the prince | 2 | 7 | 3 |
| of the prince of wales | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| the king of the belgians | 3 | 6 | 4 |
| at the same time the | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| she was queen of england | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| but that was not all | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| majority in the house of | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| prince leopold of saxe coburg | 7 | 4 | 2 |
| that s quite another thing | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| the duchess of kent and | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| the foreign policy of england | 7 | 4 | 2 |
| the ladies of the bedchamber | 7 | 4 | 2 |
| the prince of wales the | 7 | 4 | 3 |
| to the king of the | 7 | 4 | 2 |

Moreover, in QVB Queen Victoria is very often referred to with titles that indicate her changing status. Initially she is referred to as “princess” or “Princess Victoria” in Table 12 and Table 13. The collocation *confided* in Table 12 suggests an association with Victoria’s young age and inexperience at the time. She is depicted as a modest person ready to listen to more expert advice, a quality that reflects well on a ruler’s domestic female identity.

Table 12. GraphColl collocation results for *Princess Victoria*

| Collocate | Rank | Freq. (scaled) | Freq.LR | Freq.L | Freq.R | Range | Likelihood | Effect |
|-----------|------|----------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------------|--------|
| the | 1 | 60360 | 17 | 11 | 6 | 2 | 11.838 | 1.317 |
| franconia | 2 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |
| confided | 2 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |

Table 13. KWIC results for *Princess Victoria*

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt | became assets of the official majority of the nation. The | Princess Victoria | was henceforward the living symbol of the victory |
| Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt | accession, the Radical newspapers were full of suggestions that the | Princess Victoria | was in danger from the machinations of her |
| Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt | attempt to prepare the ground for a match between the | Princess Victoria | and one of the sons of the Prince |
| Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt | her Major-Domo. There were familiarities, and one day the | Princess Victoria | discovered the fact. She confided what she had |
| Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt | Kent sat on the King’s right hand, and the | Princess Victoria | opposite. At the end of the dinner, in |
| Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt | too, had an adherent who could not be neglected. The | Princess Victoria | said nothing, but she had been much attached |
| Antecedents_ Queen_Victoria.txt | territory of Amorbach in Lower Franconia. In 1803 he married the | Princess Victoria, | at that time seventeen years of age. Three |
| Childhood_ Queen_Victoria.txt | to Kensington Palace, she was put to play with the | Princess Victoria, | who was the same age as herself. The |

| | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| Childhood_Queen_Victoria.txt | would in all probability never again be a mother; the | Princess Victoria, | therefore, was recognised by Parliament as heir-presumptive; |
| Childhood_Queen_Victoria.txt | close at hand. All eyes, all thoughts, turned towards the | Princess Victoria; | but she still remained, shut away in the |

However, in Tables 14 and Table 15 the title “Queen Victoria” (5 occurrences) replaces the title “Princess Victoria” which in turn is replaced by “Victoria”, which collocates with the possessive Saxons genitive (217 occurrences, see Table 16 and Table 17), and “the Queen” (207 occurrences). In Table 15 Victoria is still represented as a pleasant figure which contrasts with the depiction of her uncles defined as *nasty old men*. Furthermore, the concordances of *Queen Victoria* present the unusual collocation with *dachshunds* (Table 14).

Table 14. GraphColl collocation results for *Queen Victoria*

| Collocate | Rank | Freq. (scaled) | Freq.LR | Freq.L | Freq.R | Range | Likelihood | Effect |
|-----------|------|----------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------------|--------|
| dachshund | 1 | 10 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 13.081 | 10.789 |
| nasty | 1 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 13.081 | 10.789 |
| unknowing | 1 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 13.081 | 10.789 |
| steady | 4 | 20 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.643 | 9.789 |
| baden | 5 | 30 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 10.816 | 9.204 |

Table 15. KWIC results for *Queen Victoria*

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------------|--|
| Lord_Melbourne_Queen_Victoria.txt | all, struck everybody with overwhelming force was the contrast between | Queen Victoria | and her uncles. The nasty old men, debauched |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | majority of her subjects had never known a time when | Queen Victoria | had not been reigning over them. She had |
| Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt | in the Belgian capital, but she was not remarked; and | Queen Victoria | passed unknowing before the steady gaze of one |
| Widowhood_Queen_Victoria.txt | Consort was the central turning-point in the history of | Queen Victoria. | She herself felt that her true life had |

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------|---|
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | the visitor of “Waldmann: the very favourite little dachshund of | Queen Victoria; | who brought him from Baden, April 1872; died, July 11, 1881.” |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------|---|

Table 16. GraphColl collocation results for *Victoria*

| Collocate | Rank | Freq. (scaled) | Freq.LR | Freq.L | Freq.R | Range | Likelihood | Effect |
|-----------|------|----------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------------|--------|
| s | 1 | 4790 | 48 | 1 | 47 | 8 | 50.061 | 1.758 |

Table 17. first 15 KWIC results for *Victoria*

| | | | |
|--|---|-----------|---|
| Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt | be of an extremely limited kind. Over the whole of | Victoria’ | s private life the Baroness reigned supreme; and she |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | CHAPTER IX. OLD AGE I Meanwhile in | Victoria’ | s private life many changes and developments had taken |
| Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt | it seems probable that, at the time of her death, | Victoria’ | s private fortune approached two million pounds. In order |
| Widowhood_Queen_Victoria.txt | would join forces with Denmark in a war against Prussia | Victoria’ | s agitation grew febrile in its intensity. Towards her |
| Last_Years_Of_Prince_Consort_Queen_Victoria.txt | accident. He escaped with a few cuts and bruises; but | Victoria’ | s alarm was extreme, though she concealed it. “It |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | For in her last years there was a fascination in | Victoria’ | s amiability which had been lacking even from the |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | the small bowing head. It was in her family that | Victoria’ | s ascendancy reached its highest point. All her offspring |
| Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt | future of the Irish Church was hanging in the balance, | Victoria’ | s attention was drawn to another proposed reform. It |
| Marriage_Queen_Victoria.txt | to an end, there had been a complete change in | Victoria’ | s attitude towards him. His appreciation of the Prince |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------|--|
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | Martin agreed; and yet the canker spread. In another direction | Victoria' | s comprehension of the spirit of her age has |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | obeyed the spirit; still the daily hours of labour proclaimed | Victoria' | s consecration to duty and to the ideal of |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | an invalid from birth, died prematurely, shortly after his marriage. | Victoria' | s cup of sorrows was indeed overflowing; and the |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | pyramids, tombs, statues, cairns, and seats of inscribed granite, proclaimed | Victoria' | s dedication to the dead. There, twice a year, |
| Lord_Melbourne_Queen_Victoria.txt | of private life. Certainly her hand is everywhere discernible in | Victoria' | s early correspondence. The Journal is written in the |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | even a play. One of the most marked indications of | Victoria' | s enfranchisement from the thralldom of widowhood had been |

Such an unusual collocation can be justified by Strachey's continuous attempt in building her matron's female identity by depicting scenarios of domesticity referring to her favourite domestic companion, as in Table 15.

Table 18. GraphColl collocation results for *empress*

| Collocate | Rank | Freq. (scaled) | Freq.LR | Freq.L | Freq.R | Range | Likelihood | Effect |
|----------------|------|----------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|------------|--------|
| india | 1 | 60 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 30.807 | 8.789 |
| the | 2 | 60360 | 18 | 14 | 4 | 3 | 13.965 | 1.399 |
| victoria | 3 | 2620 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 13.561 | 3.755 |
| england | 4 | 1330 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 12.349 | 4.318 |
| audacity | 5 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |
| betrothed | 5 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |
| quintessential | 5 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |
| pivot | 5 | 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 11.686 | 9.789 |
| become | 9 | 410 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 11.199 | 5.431 |

Table 19. KWIC results for *empress*

| | | | |
|--|---|----------|---|
| Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt | of Beaconsfield went to Windsor to dine with the new | Empress | of India. That night the Faery, usually so homely |
| Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt | suggestion that the Queen of England ought to become the | Empress | of India. Victoria seized upon the idea with avidity, |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | personal matter, too. Victoria was the Queen of England, the | Empress | of India, the quintessential pivot round which the whole |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | it must not take place. A fierce struggle between the | Empress | and the Chancellor followed. Victoria, whose hatred of her |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | following year the Prince Imperial, the only son of the | Empress | Eugenie, to whom Victoria, since the catastrophe of 1870, had |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | a violent crisis. One of the daughters of the new | Empress | had become betrothed to Prince Alexander of Battenberg, who |
| Old_Age_Queen_Victoria.txt | the hostility of the Tsar. Victoria, as well as the | Empress, | highly approved of the match. Of the two brothers |
| Gladstone_And_Lord_Beaconsfield_Queen_Victoria.txt | in a flowery oration proposed the health of the Queen- | Empress. | His audacity was well received, and his speech was |
| Last_Years_Of_Prince_Consort_Queen_Victoria.txt | him; but at last a visit of the Emperor and | Empress | to England was arranged. Directly he appeared at Windsor |
| Last_Years_Of_Prince_Consort_Queen_Victoria.txt | as 'tres compliquee.'" Victoria, too, became much attached to the | Empress, | whose looks and graces she admired without a touch |

In Table 19 Victoria is referred to as “empress” only after she becomes “Queen of England and Empress of India”. This timeframe is linked to the findings displayed in Table 18, where the lexical items *England*, *Victoria* and *empress* appear among the collocations. Moreover, the recurrence of the title Empress of India makes it possible to follow Strachey’s chronological

imperial propaganda discourse starting from the beginning till when he presents the queen as eager to establish an official link with India:

- (7) Disraeli, who had suddenly veered towards a new Imperialism, had thrown out the suggestion that the Queen of England ought to become the Empress of India. Victoria seized upon the idea with avidity, and, in season and out of season, pressed upon her Prime Minister the desirability of putting his proposal into practice. He demurred; but she was not to be baulked; and in 1876, in spite of his own unwillingness and that of his entire Cabinet, he found himself obliged to add to the troubles of a stormy session by introducing a bill for the alteration of the Royal Title (228).

Strachey shows how Victoria was pleased with her title of Empress of India and the new close relationship established between herself and the Indian subcontinent. As observed also by Le Jeune (2017), one of the aspects of India the Queen mostly admired was its ornamentalism. After the new title of empress was conferred to Victoria, celebrations were held both in England and in Dehli. Strachey shows how happy and satisfied she was about the ceremonials that surrounded the bestowal of the new title:

- (8) When the affair was successfully over, the imperial triumph was celebrated in a suitable manner. On the day of the Delhi Proclamation, the new Earl of Beaconsfield went to Windsor to dine with the new Empress of India. That night the Faery, usually so homely in her attire, appeared in a glittering panoply of enormous uncut jewels, which had been presented to her by the reigning Princes of her Raj. At the end of the meal the Prime Minister, breaking through the rules of etiquette, arose, and in a flowery oration proposed the health of the Queen-Empress. His audacity was well received, and his speech was rewarded by a smiling curtsy (229).

Strachey also underlines the centrality of the monarchy in English politics, in particular the role played by Victoria's personality as Queen of England and Empress of India, not only in representing the new imperialism in the late nineteenth century, but also in constructing its ideology. He identifies with the Crown, and thus directly with Victoria, England's might and extraordinary destiny, highlighting not only the yoke that Victoria had over India but also stressing the "superior" vitality of the "English race" embodied by Victoria's long reign:

- (9) Naturally it was in the Crown that the mysticism of the English polity was concentrated – the Crown, with its venerable antiquity, its sacred associations, its imposing spectacular array. But, for nearly two centuries, common-sense had been predominant in the great building, and the little, unexplored, inexplicable corner had attracted small attention. Then, with the rise of imperialism, there was a change. For imperialism is a faith as well as a business; as it grew, the mysticism in English public life grew with it; and simultaneously a new importance began to attach to the Crown. The need for a symbol – a symbol of England’s might, of England’s worth, of England’s extraordinary and mysterious destiny – became felt more urgently than ever before. The Crown was that symbol: and the Crown rested upon the head of Victoria. Thus, it happened that while by the end of the reign the power of the sovereign had appreciably diminished, the prestige of the sovereign had enormously grown. Yet this prestige was not merely the outcome of public changes; it was an intensely personal matter, too. Victoria was the Queen of England, the Empress of India, the quintessential pivot round which the whole magnificent machine was revolving – but how much more besides! (263)

He, then, goes on listing Victoria’s qualities that make her the best representative for this public role, thus strongly connecting propaganda for the empire with the monarch. As observed by Cannadine (2001: 206), “a whole range of public ceremonials was evolved and elaborated, invented and inaugurated, to commemorate the rites of passage of imperial British monarchs in ways that were both far-reaching and of unprecedented extravagance”. Strachey records Victoria’s role in such public ceremonials:

- (10) In London, she opened in high state the Colonial and Indian Exhibition at South Kensington. On this occasion the ceremonial was particularly magnificent; a blare of trumpets announced the approach of Her Majesty; the ‘National Anthem’ followed; and the Queen, seated on a gorgeous throne of hammered gold, replied with her own lips to the address that was presented to her. Then she rose, and, advancing upon the platform with regal port, acknowledged the acclamations of the great assembly by a succession of curtseys, of elaborate and commanding grace (243-244).

Strachey also shows how Disraeli contributed to the promotion of the imperial role of Queen Victoria by surrounding their relationship with

a romantic aura. Indeed, Disraeli went so far as to call Victoria the Fairy, forming “an inseparable unity” in promoting the new mysticism of the crown:

- (11) Faery gift! Did he smile as he wrote the words? Perhaps; and yet it would be rash to conclude that his fervid declarations were altogether without sincerity. Actor and spectator both, the two characters were so intimately blended together in that odd composition that they formed an inseparable unity, and it was impossible to say that one of them was less genuine than the other. [...] he could be overwhelmed by the immemorial panoply of royalty, and, thrilling with the sense of his own strange elevation, dream himself into a gorgeous phantasy of crowns and powers and chivalric love (226).

Queen Victoria, on the contrary, retained her common-sense attitude as noted by Strachey (p. 227): “Her emotions, with all their intensity and all their exaggeration, retained the plain prosaic texture of everyday life”.

On the occasion of her jubilee, the close relationship between Queen Victoria and her people, both British and colonial, is solemnly recorded by Strachey:

- (12) Next year was the fiftieth of her reign, and in June the splendid anniversary was celebrated in solemn pomp. Victoria, surrounded by the highest dignitaries of her realm, escorted by a glittering galaxy of kings and princes, drove through the crowded enthusiasm of the capital to render thanks to God in Westminster Abbey. In that triumphant hour the last remaining traces of past antipathies and past disagreements were altogether swept away. The Queen was hailed at once as the mother of her people and as the embodied symbol of their imperial greatness; and she responded to the double sentiment with all the ardour of her spirit. England and the people of England, she knew it, she felt it, were, in some wonderful and yet quite simple manner, *hers*. Exultation, affection, gratitude, a profound sense of obligation, an unbounded pride – such were her emotions; and, colouring and intensifying the rest, there was something else. At last, after so long, happiness – fragmentary, perhaps, and charged with gravity, but true and unmistakable none the less – had returned to her. The unaccustomed feeling filled and warmed her consciousness. When, at Buckingham Palace again, the long ceremony over, she was asked how she was, “I am very tired, but very happy”, she said (244).

In essence, Strachey's biography of Queen Victoria can be considered a piece of propaganda as it contributed to the construction of the imperial cultural formation of England by identifying the sovereign with the very emblem of monarchy and empire even throughout her changing status in positions of power. It, however, presents a specific type of imperialism, not so much marked by Darwinian and militaristic excesses, but characterized by a sort of matriarchal governance. Strachey represents the female monarch as the centre of family life, extending her influence on the empire as if it was just an extension of her family. Furthermore, despite his anti-militaristic views, keywords, collocation and concordance analyses have uncovered how Strachey reiterates and consolidates the Victorian imperialist view in which Britain assumed the role of progress and civilisation exporter towards those that were viewed as uncivilised.

Even though the most extreme Darwinist and militaristic tones of the imperialist ideology are absent from the QVB, the favourable light shed on the mystical quality of the British Empire and on Victoria, a Tory imperialist herself no less than her minister, shows clearly that her biography is a piece of propaganda. Such propaganda favours the colonial frame of mind so widespread in Victorian and Edwardian Britain among all social classes and which, as MacKenzie (1990) claims, inaugurated a period – which would last until the accession of Elizabeth II – in which all great royal occasions would be imperial.

6. Discussion of the data

The analysis of the data has so far highlighted that the keywords *empire*, *British*, *colony* and *civilised* encode propaganda in QVB, which can be achieved also through the persuasive techniques and devices previously discussed. While *empire* collocates with the semantic sphere of vastness and greatness and its concordances refer to the sphere of legal structures, the keyword *British* also collocates with *constitution*, thus creating a pattern that conveys British superiority in regard to political and legislative power. Hence, propaganda is encoded by legitimising British dominion over the colonies, in this case, through implication, which Karamova et al. (2019) considers one of main persuasive strategy. An instance of the implication of British superiority is achieved by the nominalisation occurring in example (1), observable in the cluster *impassivity of that yellow face*.

The data analysis of QVB has also foregrounded the cluster *Empress of India* as being related to place and white superiority, since it clearly conveys

Victoria's possession and power over an entity which she ruled from a distance. Such a notion is further strengthened by the keyword *colony* and its collocates with *India* and other lexical terms suggesting subservience, thus reinforcing the idea of submission to a white motherland. The collocation *civilised world*, referring to space dominated by English influence, contributes to the reinforcement of the idea of England as an exporter of civilization to its domains and submissive colonies. Thus, it can also be considered as being related to place and white superiority.

However, while the colonies were certainly viewed as a conquered domain of the empire that had to submit to the English motherland, they were also heavily romanticised, as can be observed in example (2). The brief passage utilises repetition to implement the persuasive reduction strategy described by Karamova et al. (2019), through which propaganda is enacted by deliberately attempting to shape the perception of reality (Zečić 2022). The reduction consists of the limited and deceiving romanticised view of the colonies and the Orient provided by the text, while repetition is not implemented by the reiteration of single words but through the constant recurrence of the same semantic sphere. Strachey, indeed, juxtaposes the repetition of terms related to the semantic sphere of excitement and greatness like *wonderful*, *elation* and *grandeur*, and terms related to the semantic sphere of dreams and dream-like states such as *conjuring*, *visions*, *dazzled* and *dreamed*. Traces of this dream-like fascination can also be observed in Table 9, which displays the collocation results for the keyword *India*. As described by Karamova et al. (2019), repetition creates a cohesive pattern and further stresses the parts that the deliverer wants the addressee to focus on. In this case, Strachey's cohesive pattern is achieved through the repetition of semantic spheres which allows the reader to focus on a reductive and romanticised view of the Orient, thus promoting the taste for the exotic prevalent at the time. This notion can also be confirmed in example (4), where Strachey once again stresses the fascination that Victoria held for India: « [...] she had grown enamoured of the East. The thought of India fascinated her ».

It is to be expected that Strachey would attach to Victoria different political titles as he portrayed her through the years and the evolution of her reign. The analysed data allows to establish how her changing status in QVB relates to the imperial propaganda discourse in which Strachey engages. The common denominator among all her titles is Strachey's attempt to build for Victoria a well-respected matriarchal female identity, with which her subjects could identify. This approach is already evident in

example (6), which portrays a quarrel between Victoria and Albert where Victoria acknowledges her role as a wife. Such an identification also creates contact with the addressee, which is achieved through a positively marked evaluative vocabulary designed to arouse the attention and trust of the reader (Karamova et al. 2019).

Through her first title *Princess Victoria*, Victoria is portrayed as a modest person, which already reflects well on the domestic female identity that Strachey is attempting to build. Once Victoria has reached the title of *Queen Victoria*, Strachey continues to depict her as a positive figure, directly contrasted with her uncles who are *nasty old men*. Furthermore, Strachey portrays Victoria as mother to her people as can be observed in example (5) – in which he reports Victoria’s own sentiments “I feel as if these were my own children” – and in example (12) “The Queen was hailed at once as the mother of her people and as the embodied symbol of their imperial greatness “. Therefore, the female monarch is represented as an extension of family life in which Victoria controls the empire and the colony like a mother controls her house and children. By her last title *Empress of India*, it can be inferred that India is viewed as an extension of the British homeland to be controlled by the empress who is in control of the country, just like, as a woman, she is granted dominion over the domestic duty of the house. Since the Queen, mother to her people, embodies the symbol of imperial greatness, it is possible to observe MacKenzie (1990)’s claim, which places reverence for the monarch not only as closely bound up with the monarch’s imperial role, but also as one of the elements of the new imperialism. Thus, throughout Victoria’s changing political status in QVB, Strachey contributes to propaganda discourse by delineating for Victoria a constant domestic female identity with which the readers could identify with, and revere, even after her death.

Victoria’s positive reputation as mother to her people, and her portrayal under the lens of a matriarchal governance, were also constructed through Strachey’s own innovative techniques as a new biographer, which focused on personality and anecdotes (Thirriard 2021). Indeed, Victoria’s final triumph as mother to her people is also built through anecdotes that not only highlight her success, but also her failures, thus distancing Strachey from the earlier Victorian unidimensional biographers, centred exclusively on hero-worshipping (Atkinson 2010). Example (12) depicts Victoria’s triumph by stating that “In that triumphant hour the last remaining traces of past antipathies and past disagreements were altogether swept away”, thus employing anecdotes to raise the character of the queen. However, as implied by “traces of past antipathies and past disagreements”, Strachey

does not hesitate to utilise anecdotes to depict Victoria's fiascos, as can also be observed in example (3) in reference to her failing reign during the 1870s. In addition to her failures, Strachey also portrays Victoria in common daily-life episodes as can be observed in example (6), which narrates an argument with her husband where Victoria, to solve the argument, seems to acknowledge her much common role of a wife.

Hence, Strachey critically deconstructed Victoria's reputation, humanizing her figure as that of a mortal woman who was also capable of mistakes and failures, only to then raise said reputation again through her virtues as a mother to the country. Queen Victoria is not the perfect hero, but rather a woman attempting to the best of her ability to uphold her domestic duties, not only in the home but to the country, an approach that draws away from the Victorian notion of hero-worship with its consequent moralistic image of the self (Thirriard 2021). It is, then, through anecdotes and the deconstruction, and consequent rebuilding, of her reputation that Strachey establishes his framework for a kind of imperialism characterised by a matriarchal governance and by Victoria's domestic identity, which then contributes to propaganda discourse by allowing his readers to identify with that domestic identity and revere the ruler as mother to her people.

7. Concluding remarks

To conclude, it can surely be stated that Strachey contributed to colonial propaganda despite the apparent contradiction with his anti-militaristic views by the use of specific keywords. For instance, the keyword *empire* refers to geographical vastness and space, while its concordances refer to the semantic sphere of constitutional, legislative and legal structure. Furthermore, the keyword *British* collocates with *constitution*, thus underscoring British superiority in terms of legislative and political power and it encodes propaganda discourse by legitimising British dominion over the colonies.

Repeated reference to white British superiority is represented by the collocation and concordances of the cluster *Empress of India* which clearly indicates Victoria's colonial possession that she actually ruled from a distance. The keyword *colony* and its collocations with India and lexical items suggesting subservience reinforce the notion of submission to the "superior" white motherland (England). This demonstrates that, although Strachey distanced himself from Victorian hero-worship and militarism, he still adhered to British superiority as suggested by the collocations of

the keyword *civilised*, forming the concordance *civilised world*, that can be considered part of propaganda discourse relating to white British superiority. It is also yet another indicator that, despite his anti-militaristic views, Strachey reinforces the Victorian imperialist belief that Britain was responsible for spreading progress and civilisation to those deemed uncivilised.

Regarding the relationship between Victoria's changing political status and propaganda discourse, as also observed in the qualitative analysis, Strachey consistently portrays Victoria throughout the years under the lens of a matriarchal governance. As indicated by MacKenzie (1990), reverence for the monarch, closely bound up with the monarch's imperial role, is one of the elements of the new imperialism together with militarism and hero worship. Strachey represents the female monarch as the centre of family life, extending her influence over the empire as if it was just an extension of her family. Since women are granted dominion and management over the domestic sphere, as can be inferred by the use of the cluster *Empress of India*, India itself is viewed as an extension of the British homeland to be dominated even by a woman such as Queen Victoria. Hence, throughout Victoria's changing political status, Strachey still contributes to propaganda discourse by allowing his male and female readership alike to identify and support this extension of Victoria's domestic female identity. This identity was constructed through Strachey's new way of writing biographies, focused on personalities and anecdotes, which allowed him to play with Victoria's reputation to establish and promote his framework of an imperialism based on a matriarchal governance. QVB is therefore part of the ideological mood of the time, proving how even the Bloomsbury intelligentsia was not insensitive to the new imperial nationalism which dominated British society.

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