

**Viscount Lymington: The Journey of a fascist ‘Fellow Traveler’**

By

Kian Aspinall

Canterbury Christ Church University

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## Preface

This study, in short, excavates the political career of Viscount Lymington. He was, at various points, a member of parliament, an aristocrat, a lord, an agriculturalist, an author, and, in the late 1930s, a popular fascist ideologue. This historical study tracks Lymington as he travelled through the late 1920s, into and through the 1930s and wartime, showcasing how his ideas and politics evolved into an identifiably fascist worldview and how he obtained a prominent position within the British fascist milieu of the inter-war period. Lymington journeyed from his place as a young conservative aristocrat to an important tributary to the historical development of British fascism. This study is an investigation into that process.



*Viscount Lymington*

## Contents

<b>Chapter 1 – An Introduction to Viscount Lymington.....</b>	<b>6</b>
- Literature Review.....	11
- Fascist Studies and Viscount Lymington.....	17
- Methodology.....	28
- Political Crises of Party, Property and Empire.....	31
<b>Chapter 2 – Viscount Lymington M. P.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Chapter 3 – The English Mistery.....</b>	<b>53</b>
- The Political Character of the English Mistery.....	54
- The Structure of the English Mistery.....	61
- The Split in the English Mistery and formation of the English Array.....	65
<b>Chapter 4 – The English Array .....</b>	<b>70</b>
- Structure and Activities of the English Array.....	72
- The English Array and Europe.....	76
<b>Chapter 5 – Viscount Lymington: Ideologue and Appeaser.....</b>	<b>82</b>
- <i>Famine in England</i> .....	83
- Lymington and <i>Famine in England</i> in the Public Eye.....	87
- The British Council Against European Commitments.....	96
<b>Chapter 6 – The Kinship in Husbandry.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Chapter 7 – Concluding Thoughts.....</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>114</b>

## **Viscount Lymington: The Journey of a fascist ‘Fellow Traveler’**

‘The policy of the Imperial Fascist League is identical with that which you advocate’ – Arnold Leese<sup>1</sup>

‘If you can succeed in leading this body, you will find it comparatively easy to be Lord protector of this whole country’ – William Sanderson<sup>2</sup>

### **An Introduction to Viscount Lymington**

In 1938 Viscount Lymington obtained the favor of Arnold Leese, leader of the Imperial Fascist League, Oswald Mosley of the British Union of Fascists, and some of the most powerful state figures and aristocrats in inter-war Britain. He held talks with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, featured across the national British press and contributed to, with enthusiastic praise from, T. S. Elliot’s publication *Criterion*. Viscount Lymington can be considered an agriculturalist, landowner, aristocrat, politician and a popular and influential far-right ideologue. This was all following his five-year career as a member of parliament and preceded his accession to the House of Lords. This study will attempt to excavate the history of this figure, tracing his activities and intellectual development, and offer a historical and biographical synthesis to show how his different avenues of interest and ideological dispositions led to a worldview which sat firmly within but was not in its scope confined to the realm of British fascism.

Lymington, whose real name was Gerard Vernon Wallop, was an American born aristocrat who moved to England for his education soon after being born on 16 May 1898.<sup>3</sup> He moved from his ranch in Wyoming to his familial landed property named Farleigh Wallop, Hampshire. He attended a private preparatory school in Winchester and then read history and economics at Oxford University and attended Oxford’s School of Agriculture. In 1916, Lymington signed up to the British army, serving in both cavalry and machine gunner regiments. The war influenced Lymington’s turn to farming, as he recorded in his later autobiography that the contrast between healthy countryside and destructive warfare indicated to him what he valued as the basis of civilization.<sup>4</sup> In the 1920s, he involved himself heavily in the running of his family home in Hampshire and improved its capacity for farming, the traditional focus of its substantial holdings. In 1929 he was elected as the Member of Parliament for Basingstoke. During his time in the House of Commons he made contacts that stayed with him until the outbreak

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold Leese to Lymington, 5 April 1938, 15M84/F148/4.

<sup>2</sup> William Sanderson to Lymington, August 16, 1933, 15M84/F411.

<sup>3</sup> Gerard Wallop adopted the alias ‘Viscount Lymington’ in 1925 and continued to refer to himself and be known to others by this name for the rest of his life, so therefore will be referred to as such throughout this study.

<sup>4</sup> Lymington, *A Knot of Roots* (London: 1965) pp.31-34; 15M84/F170.

of World War Two, spoke frequently in Common's debates on topics such as topics of British agriculture and economics, empire, trade, and global affairs. Lymington was also part of significant events surrounding changes (or perhaps the prevention of changes) in the British empire, particularly regarding India. He partook in multiple rebellions against Stanley Baldwin and the Conservative Party leadership, and especially so in a movement led by Winston Churchill, the India Defence League. This group campaigned against political concessions to India, and Lymington visited India on a research mission for the Conservative rebels. In 1934 Lymington resigned from parliament, citing a total loss of faith in the democratic process and a belief that the Conservatives no longer fully represented his interests.

Simultaneously to his in time the House of Commons, Viscount Lymington became a leading figure in the esoteric quasi-political group, the English Mistery. This group, by Lymington's own confession, had a profound influence on his political views and no doubt contributed to his growing skepticism of democracy and, indeed, his eventual rejection of it. There can be no doubt either, though, that Lymington was a driving force in the group and, as shall be seen, did establish himself as their brightest light. The English Mistery has featured in a variety of historical works and while there are debates to be had regarding its relationship with or place within British fascism, importantly there is a clear consensus that it represented a strain of far-right thought in inter-war Britain.

Viscount Lymington led the organization alongside an influential figure in his life, William Sanderson, who was previously a member of the extremist and anti-Semitic Order of the Red Rose, as well as Arnold Leese's Imperial Fascist League. After a split in the English Mistery which, on top of broader tensions within the group, was the product of personal and political differences between Sanderson and Lymington, the latter constructed another far-right but more politically cogent group, the English Array. Lymington was the executive head of this group. It lost some of Sanderson's explicit conspiratorial thinking which had caused difficulties and became more ideologically coherent. However, it was and is understood by historians as being an offshoot of the English Mistery, and there was more ideological continuity than disconnect between the two. The most important changes were in membership and Lymington's increasing focus on the international politics of the late 1930s. The English Array took with it the most prominent activists and thinkers. One such figure was Anthony Ludovici, who was close friends with Lymington until the post-war period. Lymington and Ludovici established quickly a reciprocal and influential relationship. Ludovici, while being an understudied figure in the history of British politics, was

undoubtedly one of the most prolific far-right ideologues of the early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> Ludovici was the English Mystery and English Array's intellectual and Lymington the 'leading light'.<sup>6</sup>

Lymington, in the late 1930s and during growing global tensions, formed the British Council Against European Commitments. This was one of several political organisations supporting the appeasement policy forwarded by Neville Chamberlain. Lymington's own support was motivated by his longstanding admiration for Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, which by 1939 he had made known in several speeches, articles, and pamphlets. Indeed, Lymington met Benito Mussolini in 1929 and 1932, and visited high ranking Nazis on several occasions. He even attended dinner with Adolf Hitler. Lymington's activities in the appeasement movement attracted the attention of the House of Commons and eventuated in the discussion between himself and Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Following the outbreak of war, Lymington's political activities in the English Array and British Council Against European Commitments came to a halt. He embraced war time duties and worked on the wartime Hampshire Agricultural Council and used his experience in farming to influence state policy on food management and production. He also became a founding member of the Kinship in Husbandry, a prominent organization in the organic movement of mid-twentieth century Britain that was also home to Rolf Gardiner, another of Lymington's close compatriots. Gardiner has been a well-studied figure and appropriately so, for he was one of the leading voices of the inter-war organicist movement and openly supportive of Nazi Germany. The Kinship in Husbandry advocated an agricultural revival intertwined with a eugenic and racial outlook, a feature of Lymington's politics throughout his political career. The organization was important in the formation of the Soil Association, a large body of influential agricultural thought that exists to this day. It reached influential echelons of British society, drawing direct communication from figures such as Eve Balfour to Viscount Lymington.

While Lymington was operating in these groups he was also a prominent author and popular in journalistic circles. He published several articles in multiple journals, such as T. S. Elliot's *Criterion*, *The New English Weekly* and the *English Review*. He also held the favor of agricultural press outlets, and his book *Famine in England* placed him firmly into the national press and national prominence. As we shall later see, it also cemented his position as an ideologue of a far-right milieu and encouraged formal invitations of cooperation from state organisations such as the B. B. C. Elsewhere, from the British Union of Fascists. While Lymington did hold a significant position in

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<sup>5</sup> Bernhard Dietz, *Neo-Tories: The Revolt of British Conservatives against Democracy and Political Modernity (1929-1939)* trans. Ian Copestake (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012) pp.20-30.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



particular circles of British agriculture and politics before the publication of *Famine in England*, as one scholar has noted, it truly ‘catapulted Lymington the national picture’.<sup>7</sup>

So, what we have in Viscount Lymington is a figure who operated in multiple spheres of British life and obtained a level of prominence few people could claim, but what makes Lymington worth studying are his political operations and his worldview. His ideology was undoubtedly complex and multifaceted; it contained a strong eugenic streak, a racial outlook and traditional notions of empire and its necessary place in British politics. There was, co-constitutive with this, a focus on agricultural revivalism and an organicist primacy. This stemmed from his position as a farming landowner, his class position being imperative in the development of his worldview. Thus, inflecting upon all these components was an aristocratic coloring, and a lamentation over the changes in the position of traditional elites in Britain. Such changes were, in fact, key to the development of Lymington’s ideals. His politics were, indeed, the product of his class position meeting historical conditions, conditions which were turbulent and profound. Fundamental changes in aristocratic and conservative relations to property, changes in the state of the British Empire, economic and agricultural changes in Britain all weighed heavy on Lymington’s worldview and constituted the basis for his politics. Indeed, several scholars have recently attempted to re-cast the events of the 1930s and 1940s in the light of empire.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, this study highlights Lymington’s attachment to empire and the ideological contents of his imperial outlook, and how this undergirded and presupposed many of his political priorities. The scope of this study will remain largely between 1929, Lymington’s election to the House of Commons, and 1945, the final year of World War Two. This is because Lymington’s most important intellectual development and political activities were in this period, and after 1945 he became so disillusioned with British politics he retreated to Kenya and lived a life essentially removed from political intervention. These dates also provide a fence around Lymington’s key political journey, from young aristocratic farmer to fascist ideologue, which is the subject of this study. Now, though, a contextual section will be offered to account for the historical conditions by which Lymington was molded. First, the existing literature on and scholarly interpretations of Lymington to date will be examined.

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<sup>7</sup> Philip Conford, ‘Organic Society: Agriculture and Radical Politics in the Career of Gerard Wallop, Ninth Earl of Portsmouth (1898-1984)’, *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. 53 No. 1 (2005) pp.78-96 (pp.84-89).

<sup>8</sup> For example; Richard Overly, *The Great Imperial War: 1931-1945* (London: Penguin Random House, 2021); Guido Giacomo Preparata, *Conjuring Hitler: How Britain and America made the Third Reich* (London: Pluto Press, 2005).

## Literature Review

As a result of the different avenues of British life Viscount Lymington was involved in, he appears in a variety of texts from a variety of scholarly disciplines. Several different studies on British agriculture, literature, aristocracy and fascism all run into our subject. The clearest historiographical coverage of Lymington's political activities and therefore the realm from which the driving research questions of this study can be drawn from is in the field of historical fascist studies and of the British political landscape of the early to mid-twentieth century. However, it is important to place Lymington in the light of the existing literature that investigate areas besides British fascism. Studies in agricultural history, for example, have frequently covered Lymington due to his prominence in the field. Anna Bramwell, in her 1989 study, recognized the importance of Lymington in the early British organic movement. Bramwell located Lymington as one of several men that were 'too extreme for Mosley' whose political dispositions could be described as 'British National Socialist'.<sup>9</sup> Lymington's ideology was also described specifically by Bramwell as an offshoot of the 'High Tory movement' and that he was an 'Anglo-Saxon nationalist'.<sup>10</sup> How these connected to Lymington's organic disposition and his activities to this end were not, however, expanded upon in detail.

Five years after Bramwell's study, Frank Trentmann approached the connection between organic movements and far-right ideals and place his findings in a broad network of European anti-modernist located in Germany in England, the latter hosting what Trentmann called a new or 'neo-romanticism'. Manifesting in countryside exploration and organic husbandry, Trentmann stressed that these were not ineluctably headed for fascistic variants; 'anti-modernism could function as a legitimate search for personal and collective freedom without becoming a search for national racial enemies.'<sup>11</sup> Where this neo-romanticism did meet far-right ideology and discourse, however, is where Trentmann found Lymington. One of multiple 'prominent representatives' of the far-right variants of organic husbandry in England, Trentmann described Lymington as sharing 'the wider neo-romantic metaphysics of the unconscious, authentic experience, and the continuity of generations.'<sup>12</sup> Where Lymington and his peers such as Gardiner went beyond their more moderate organicist compatriots was, in Trentmann's view, the necessary decline of a civilization once it separates itself from its 'agricultural matrix'.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Yale University Press, 1989) p.172.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid* pp.189-197.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Trentmann, 'Civilisation and Its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of Anti-Modernism in Twentieth-Century Western Culture', *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol.29 No.4 (1994) pp.583-625 (p.604).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*.

Lymington is presented as ‘the most prominent spokesman of this apocalyptic vision’ and as a proponent of a biological as well as spiritual element to this societal decline.<sup>14</sup> The biological and consequentially racial element Trentmann identifies in Lymington’s thought is pinned on a contemporary reading of the ‘well-documented late-Victorian concern with the racial effects of bad air and bad housing.’<sup>15</sup> Indeed, there are clear connections between the racial concerns of Lymington’s aristocratic Edwardian forebears and his political worldview, and as we shall see, this is a connection drawn out by other scholars.

Lymington appearing as a feature in agricultural studies continued from Bramwell and Trentmann’s studies. One such continuation was in the work of David Matless, who offered an inter-disciplinary study of how ‘Englishness’ was felt and formed across a broad cultural relationship with and emotional understanding of land, or indeed ‘landscape’. His book covered a broad range of thinkers and intellectual elements of the mid-twentieth century organic movement and its political attendants, from 1918 to the 1950s. Of most relevance to this study is a theme which Matless labelled ‘counter-currents of Englishness’, of which Lymington was party and that Matless understood as a reaction to urbanization and the reduction of fresh food consumption, resulting in the gradual separation of man and land.<sup>16</sup> This was a theme which led some of the organic movement to have what Matless described as ‘uneasy’ links with fascism.<sup>17</sup> Matless placed Lymington within this nexus but specifically where is unclear. Labelling Lymington as ‘far-right’, noting both his valorization of ‘white imperialism’ as well as his anti-Semitism, Matless was nonetheless reluctant to attach Lymington to an understanding of British fascism.<sup>18</sup> Utilizing Lymington’s reading of the work of the agriculturalist George Stapledon, undoubtedly an influence upon Lymington, Matless posited Lymington as a ‘reactionary Conservative’.<sup>19</sup> Elements of Lymington’s ideology were presented, such as ‘anti-Semitic racial theory’ and that he ‘discerned a conspiracy of political economy, with Judaism and communism conflated, and called for an alignment with fascist nationhood against the non-national communist’.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, Matless indicates a version of a third-way theory of these far-right organicists, writing that they were ‘neither socialist nor capitalist’ but instead looked to a mix of ‘High Toryism, guild socialism, imperialism, fascism’ from which to form their views.<sup>21</sup> While debating theories of the nature of fascism is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth, however, recalling John E. Richardson’s analysis of fascist discourse. In

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.611.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> David Matless, *Landscape and Englishness* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998) pp.28-33.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.33.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.19, pp.160-162

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.168.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.171.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp.166-167.

particular, his grappling with third-way theories; 'given that all fascist parties and movements support private property, the private sector of the economy and entrepreneurialism, the extent to which a fascist 'third way' is even possible is a moot point in fascism studies.'<sup>22</sup> As we shall see, Lymington at no point questioned private property, the private sector, or offered a reorganization of the relationship between workers and the means of production, thus not challenging fundamental tenets of a capitalist economy.<sup>23</sup>

Matthew Reed was the next scholar to approach Lymington as a necessary feature of his study. Reed argued in 2001 that those studying the early British organic movement must grasp the 'debt the discourse of the organic movement owes to those who were considered Fascists in their day'.<sup>24</sup> In Reed's understanding Lymington was such a figure and recognized him as part of a far-right milieu in connection with the English Mistery and the organic movement. Lymington was presented as a 'far-right group of English nationalists', and elsewhere Reed understood Lymington as a pivotal founding member of the soil association and in close contact with a pioneer of organic farming, Eve Balfour.<sup>25</sup> The latter did indeed recollect that it was Lymington's writings which persuaded her to join the organicist cause.<sup>26</sup>

Fully recognizing the importance of Lymington in the early English organic movement, Philip Conford offered in 2005 one of the few direct studies of Viscount Lymington following his history of the early organic movement.<sup>27</sup> Conford emphasized the importance of not assuming the early organic movement was politically removed, railing against a prior consensus that the movement was at best politically aloof. On the contrary, Conford demonstrated figures such as Lymington represent a strictly political and far-right variant of the movement, that there was in fact a contingent but 'close' relationship between organicism and the inter-war radical right.<sup>28</sup> Conford covered Lymington's role in the organic movement and suggested his work as an agriculturalist was 'highly regarded' even by those who were not of the same political disposition.<sup>29</sup> The English Mistery, a group which Conford recognized as a group which 'dictated most of his standards of value', and the English Array, were also treated in

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<sup>22</sup> John E. Richardson, *British Fascism: A Discourse-Historical Analysis* (Stuttgart: Ibidem Press, 2017) p.192.

<sup>23</sup> Destin Jenkins, Justin Leroy, eds., *Histories of Racial Capitalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

<sup>24</sup> Matthew Reed, 'Fight the Future! How the Contemporary Campaigns of the UK Organic Movement Have Arisen from their Composting of the Past'. *Sociologia Ruralis* Vol.43 No.1 (2001) p.131.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew Reed, 'Rebels from the Crown Down: The Organic Movement's Revolt Against Agricultural Biotechnology', *Science as Culture* Vol.11 No.4 (2002) pp.481-504 (p.486); Matthew Reed, *Rebels for the Soil: The Rise of the Global Organic Food and Farming Movement* (London: Earthscan, 2010) p.47.

<sup>26</sup> Trentmann, p.624.

<sup>27</sup> See Philip Conford, *The Origins of the Organic Movement* (Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Philip Conford, 'Organic Society: Agriculture and Radical Politics in the Career of Gerard Wallop, Ninth Earl of Portsmouth (1898-1984)', *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. 53 No. 1 (2005) pp.78-96 (pp.78-80).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79.

this study. The former was described as ‘a royalist, quasi-masonic organization, a ‘school for leadership’ dedicated to regenerating English society and the English race through a restoration of true values and individual responsibility’, and to resist ‘Jewish influence’.<sup>30</sup> The English Array, a group that while heavily related to the English Mystery was Lymington’s own organization, was understood by Conford to be a more coherent ‘political’ group, shedding some of the esoteric intellectual garments of the Mystery.<sup>31</sup> Other activities of Lymington were covered also. His book *Famine in England* is recognized as having a nationwide impact, and his later activities in the appeasement movement as well as the agricultural group *Kinship in Husbandry* were approached also. Conford, in making his broader point that the early organic movement was not politically apathetic, stated ‘it is impossible, where Lymington’s activities are concerned, to draw a line between politics and agriculture.’<sup>32</sup> Indeed, the Array’s constitutional documentation on its organic policy ‘was in most respect identical to that of the wider organic movement.’<sup>33</sup> The light that Conford cast Lymington in is one that extended to central platforms in both the agricultural scene of inter-war Britain as well as that of the far-right. While separate platforms that sustained separate activities, Conford’s dominant point is that the intellectual trajectory that led to and sustained Lymington’s position in these circles cannot be demarcated. The political and the agricultural were co-constitutive. Conford finished his study by stating Lymington was a ‘remarkable and interesting figure’, but nonetheless his contribution to the organic movement ‘must in the end be considered ambivalent.’<sup>34</sup>

Conford’s work on Lymington is of great relevance here. His study is one of very few that biographically traces Lymington’s thought and activities. However, Lymington was being utilized for Conford’s broader point, that the organic movement of the period was not opposed to political involvement. It would be unfair to interpret it, for example, as an approach to Lymington’s ideological relationship with the far-right and fascism, although Conford did not neglect the fact the Lymington entered the fascist milieu. Indeed, the English Array’s flirtation with the British Union of Fascists was acknowledged. As well, influential figures in Lymington’s life such as Anthony Ludovici, William Sanderson and Rolf Gardiner, all have documented interactions with and support of Nazism and fascism at various points. This was also understood by Conford. Using Conford’s coverage of Lymington, two themes or questions can be drawn. Namely, how Lymington journeyed toward the fascist realm in inter-war Britain, and secondly, what his position within that landscape was.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp.90-91.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.88; p.93.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.94.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

The environmental historian Andrea Gaynor picked up on the connections between the far-right and the organic movement and set out to study their manifestations in Australia, in doing so encountering Viscount Lymington. Indeed, Gaynor wrote the ‘involvement of far-right nationalists in the early organic movement has been documented by several authors’, one being Conford.<sup>35</sup> As well as acknowledging his role in the organic movement, Gaynor approaches Lymington’s political activities; ‘Significant figures included Viscount Lymington...a founding member of the Soil Association’ who ‘had links to Nazi Germany and was at the center of far-right royalist organisations the English Mistery and English Array.’<sup>36</sup> Lymington’s group the Kinship in Husbandry, who he formed with fellow prominent agriculturalist and Nazi enthusiast, Rolf Gardiner, was also given attention by Gaynor. The founding of the organization was put down to ‘right-wing organic advocates’ coming together to espouse a defense of the ‘traditional’ English countryside, ‘local food production and processing based on a pseudo-feudal ‘natural’ order with distinct racial elements.’<sup>37</sup> Jules P. Gehrke in a recent 2019 study linking organicist thought and Britain’s canal system, noted the English Mistery as ‘nationalist’ and the English Array as simply ‘right wing’.<sup>38</sup>

Such were the significance of Lymington’s close contemporaries that subsequent studies of those figures have also approached Lymington. One example of this is Clare Palmer’s paper on a leading figure of the inter-war organic movement, H. J. Massingham, a fellow member of Lymington’s Kinship in Husbandry. It was Lymington’s journalism, an important and revealing element of his career, that Palmer notes. Massingham’s publications *The Natural Order* and *England and the Farmer* hosted on multiple occasions contributions from Lymington, with Massingham finding praise for Lymington’s intention to revive England’s aristocracy.<sup>39</sup>

Palmer cited another author, Jeremy Diaper, who in his exploration of T. S. Elliot’s *Criterion* finds a number of personal exchanges between Elliot and Lymington as well as contributions from the latter to the journal. Diaper illuminated how Elliot agreed with Lymington’s view of the degrading process of urbanization and the subsequent ‘deterioration’ of man.<sup>40</sup> Elliot found Lymington’s text *Famine in England* particularly attractive, and this was

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<sup>35</sup> Andrea Gaynor, ‘Antipodean Eco Nazis? The Organic Gardening and Farming Movement and Far-right Ecology in Post-War Australia’, *Australian Historical Studies* Vol.43 No.2 (2012) pp.253-269 (p.255).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.255-256.

<sup>38</sup> Jules P. Gehrke, ‘Countryside, recreation, and the transformation of canals in Britain in the mid-twentieth century’, *Journal of Tourism History* Vol.11 No.2 (2019) pp.167-186 (p.173).

<sup>39</sup> Clare Palmer, ‘Christianity, Englishness and the Southern English Countryside: A Study of the work of H.J. Massingham’, *Social and Cultural Geography* Vol.3 No.1 (2002) pp.25-38 (p.33).

<sup>40</sup> Jeremy Diaper, ‘The ‘‘Criterion’’: An inter-war platform for agricultural discussion’, *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol.61 No.2 (2013) pp.282-300 (pp.286-292).

also noted by Diaper. The journalistic and authorial productions of Lymington are an important component of his career and reveal much, as shall be presented throughout this study, about his worldview.

The potential link between organic movements and the far-right has been further recognized by scholars of British organicism and the environment. Roger Cutting, in 2015, wrote of this emergent theme of 'Indigenous Organic Fascism' and looked to address the environmental concerns over a physical and spiritual connection to the land that drove some men to or at least somewhere within the fascist landscape. While covering important ideas central to far-right organicists, such as Rolf Gardiner's attachment to a ruralized metaphysics and the reactionary revolt against urbanization, Lymington was not given a great deal of attention. What is important here though is the emphasizing of the topic of ecology and fascism, which Cutting certainly does.<sup>41</sup>

Roger Luckhurst, who in 2020 examined links between representations of Britain's exit from the European Union and views on British landscape and ecology, continued this examination of ecological and fascist linkages. To demonstrate the historical link between Britain's far-right and British ecology, the views of the 'ardent pro-Nazi landowner' Viscount Lymington are included.<sup>42</sup> It is the case that relations between the far-right, fascism and ecology are increasingly being recognized. Recently, there has been a notable upsurge in this area of study, with multiple texts recently being released on the subject.<sup>43</sup>

In the British context, it is well recognized that Lymington was a major player in the British organic movement by those who have taken up the mantle of studying its history. His links to the far-right have also been well noted in many of these texts, as can be seen, and he is pivotal in studies like Conford's to demonstrate the importance of comprehending the possibility of environmentalism manifesting in racial politics. The most famous manifestation of this amalgam of environmental and racial politics was 'Blut und Boden', or 'Blood and Soil'. This was fundamental to Lymington's worldview and is vital in the comprehension of his politics. To explicate this, we can briefly turn to Dan Stone's study of the transnational nature of inter-war organicism and the transnational nature of 'Blut und Boden'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Roger Cutting, 'Reflections on outdoor education and English 'Indigenous Organic Fascism' in the 1930s' *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning* Vol.16 No.2 (2015) pp.105-116.

<sup>42</sup> Roger Luckhurst, 'Brexitlands dark ecologies: new British landscape writing', *Textual Practice* (2020) pp.1-21.

<sup>43</sup> Andreas Malm and the Zetkin Collective, *White Skin Black Fuel: On the Danger of Fossil Fascism* (London: Verso, 2021); Sam Moore and Alex Roberts, *The Rise of Ecofascism: Climate Change and the Far-Right* (New York: Polity Press, 2022).

<sup>44</sup> Dan Stone, 'The Ultimate cross-cultural Fertiliser': The irony of the 'transnational local' in Anglo-German rural revivalism', *European Review of History*, Vol.26 No.6 (2019) pp.996-1012

Stone indicated in this paper that a key aspect of British and European fascism, rural revivalism, was a product of a reciprocally transnational Anglo-German relationship. He showed ‘how connections can be made across time and space between British and German fascist(ic) ideologies of landscape and rural belonging.’<sup>45</sup> To do this, Stone investigated the German romanticist Georg Götsch, and, more importantly, Lymington’s friend and peer Rolf Gardiner. What is striking about the paper, and most relevant here, is that Stone suggests Lymington and the English Array, through a willing engagement with Gardiner, were deeply influenced by this Anglo-German rural revivalism, manifesting in an identifiably ‘Blood and Soil’ worldview.<sup>46</sup> However, that is not to say this aspect of the Array’s or Lymington’s political philosophy were purely products of Gardiner’s influence. In fact, as Stone documents, the ‘fundamental idea’ of Blood and Soil had been fleshed out before its coinage in 1936.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, as we shall later see, the English Mistery, Anthony Ludovici and Lymington all professed deep commitments to a type of proto-Blood and Soil politic well before this point. Indeed, in 1933 Lymington published a short article detailing the need for England to look to a regenerated land if it wished to regenerate its ‘racial stock’, and in 1930 the English Mistery had an established program of which an important part was co-constitutive racial- and rural-revivalism.<sup>48</sup>

While these ideas were clearly present, as Stone suggests, in British politics and specifically Lymington’s worldview before the latter’s move to explicitly fascist territory, it was in the late 1930s that it was most openly and enthusiastically embraced. Particularly, by Lymington, in his book *Famine in England*. This will be investigated in more depth later in this study, but it is important to note the progression and intensification of Lymington’s ‘Blood and Soil’ racism and organicism as he journeyed through the period. Stone writes that in the late 1930s there were ‘clear lines of transmission from Darre to Gardiner and Ludovici, both of whom read German and were familiar with the German political scene, and thence to Lymington.’<sup>49</sup> Stone demonstrates this point further by pointing to Gardiner’s influence on the Kinship in Husbandry, a group also later studied here and one in which Lymington was a key contributor and member. Both men molded the Kinship in Husbandry into a body promoting ‘organic farming methods with political notions of racial and cultural purity.’<sup>50</sup> Dan Stone has penned some of the most important work to date on Lymington, and so will be returned to again later.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.999

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp.1009-1111

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.906

<sup>48</sup> Viscount Lymington M. P, ‘Hammer and Sickle’, *English Review* Vol.43, No.5 (1933) pp.185-190; The English Mistery, ‘The Order of 1930 No.1 (London) 15M84/F396 pp.7-9

<sup>49</sup> Dan Stone, ‘The Ultimate cross-cultural fertiliser’, p.910

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp.910-911



At the root of Lymington's organic views, throughout the 1930s, were ideas of racial and rural regeneration. Despite professing the essential aspects beforehand, these were not labelled by him as 'Blood and Soil' until his 1938 book *Famine in England*. Here he discussed it at length, presumably after being formally introduced to the 'official' epithet by Gardiner. Lymington concluded that text by stating 'It is Blood and Soil which rule at last'.<sup>51</sup> Blood and Soil ideas were important components of Lymington's politics throughout the 1930s and 1940s. As Stone shows, it can be traced to fascist landscapes in both Britain and Germany and can be studied in certain cases as a product of Anglo-German intellectual traffic. Lymington, moving of his own accord toward the realm of British fascism, met with this traffic through his own activities and advanced his version of British Blood and Soil fascism.

### Fascist Studies and Viscount Lymington

In this section the literature which has approached Lymington as a member, participant or contributor to British fascism will be covered. It will attempt to unveil the key understandings of his political activities and his place, in or out, of British fascism amongst the most relevant literature. First, though, a discussion will be had on how fascism is being theoretically wielded here. While this piece does not intend to offer a reconceptualization of fascism or engage on a conceptual level with the various typologies found in the field of fascist studies, it will present the most useful tools in the field for understanding Lymington and thus the main theoretical bases of this piece, beginning with Roger Griffin's contributions. It will also consider some additional studies of British fascism and empire which have taken inspiration, like this study has, from the 'cultural' turn of fascist studies. Particular attention will be given to those who have taken the 'cultural' approach to British fascism and stressed a greater disciplinary focus upon the relationship between the traditions of British fascism, British imperialism and British racism.

In 1991 Roger Griffin entered the longstanding debate over definitions and understandings of fascism with his book *The Nature of Fascism*.<sup>52</sup> Using Max Weber's work on the concept of an 'ideal type', Griffin suggested bringing this to bear in fascist studies. Particularly, in debates over a definition or typology of fascism. Griffin suggested the use of an 'ideal type' approach could give more 'conceptual control', that while Griffin was not claiming for his method descriptive truth, he was purporting that it was 'useful'.<sup>53</sup> While its value was purely heuristic, 'applied consciously as an ideal type, it allows valuable research to be carried out into particular issues

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<sup>51</sup> Lymington, *Famine in England*, p.208

<sup>52</sup> Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1991)

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.45-50

on which empirically sound methods can be brought to bear.<sup>54</sup> For this ‘ideal type’ in the context of fascist studies, Griffin supposed a ‘generic fascism’. This was as a ‘genus of political ideology’, enabling the identification of fascism beyond pure political reaction.<sup>55</sup> It was more than ‘a form of millenarianism’ or the ‘anti’ view of fascism which saw its logics comprised of oppositional tenets, such as anti-socialism. Instead, Griffin located ‘fascism’s lowest common denominator’. This is the now well-cited in definition of fascism, ‘a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism’.<sup>56</sup>

Here we will follow Griffin in his use of the term ‘palingenetic’, specifically meaning ‘the vision of a radically new beginning which follows a period of destruction or perceived dissolution.’<sup>57</sup> This is because Lymington showed increasingly reactionary, sinister and fascistic concerns over ‘degeneration’ to various aspects of life in Britain and more broadly Western civilisation as he progressed through the 1930s. Early in his career he showed signs of a reactionary Conservative, proto-Blood and Soil organicism, and moved from advocating for the protection of to a return to, and then new radical forms of, British aristocracy, British Conservatism and Empire. It was in *Famine in England*, as we shall see in Chapter Five, that Lymington indicated his most extreme version of a ‘palingenetic’ racial nationalism. However, both before and after this 1938 text, Lymington consistently viewed as necessary a racial re-ordering through sinister social engineering and eugenicist practices. During the late 1930s there can be no doubt he was operating firmly in the ‘magnetic field of fascism’, this development was facilitated in part by this racial ordering which bordered his politics and linked him to both Conservatism and fascism. Lymington also had at the centre of his palingenetic vision a ‘mythical core’. That is to say, while he consistently hankered after the re-establishment of the House of Lords, Royal rule and empire, this was part of a mythologised past in which his deplorable notion of ‘racial purity’ existed. It may look on the surface as if Lymington is a simple reactionary or traditionalist, but these reactions and traditions were in his mind inseparable from the supremacy of the white race which was under threat, as he detailed in *Famine in England* and other writings. Thus, his palingenetic vision was reliant on this mythic core, his vision of past and future white supremacy substantiated by English customs and traditions. This can be considered one of the ‘various permutations’ of fascism which Griffin is alluding to in his definition.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.28

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp.28-31

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp.48-50

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp.36-40

Griffin's contributions have been taken up by scholars of British fascism. Thomas Linehan praised the utility of Griffin's notion of 'a synthetic definition of generic fascism', but also noted fascism had 'a distinct and relatively internally coherent political ideology.'<sup>58</sup> Taking this approach, Linehan was able to cast an analytical net around his subjects of study. These included the BUF, the British Fascisti and Imperial Fascist League. Groups which were qualitatively different but held to similar, identifiably fascist, core political logics. In this sense, Linehan was able to account for and explicate the 'complex amalgamation of ideas' which both precipitated and comprised fascism without 'deflating' his understanding and usage of the term.<sup>59</sup> We can apply the same to groups under the microscope here. Switching the gaze to Dan Stone, who has penned much work this study draws from, we can see a direct inference of Griffin in relation to the study of Lymington's milieu. In discussing his idea of an 'indigenous organo-fascism' Stone offers some useful clarity.

'There is much more to the far-right in Britain than its strictly fascist elements. The intellectual provenance of these elements reveals the extent to which Britain produced its own native far-right, perhaps not of the statist variety as in Italy or Germany, but certainly racist, nostalgic, eugenicist and aiming at what Roger Griffin calls palingenesis, or national rebirth.'<sup>60</sup>

To equally capture the fluidity of Lymington's political philosophy and retain a solid conceptual grasp of 'palingenesis' we can look to David D. Roberts. Lymington's journey into the realm of British fascism was a contingent one. That is to say, a product of interaction. Lymington held, as he entered the 1930s, racist and, frankly, repugnant views. But what is at issue here is the journey and political development of these views in the fluid context they existed within. Much like Lymington's racial-organicism or proto-Blood and Soil, he held too at the beginning of the 1930s what can be and are understood by Dan Stone as identifiably proto-fascist ideas. These were developed as Lymington met his context and thus moved closer to fascism. Roberts offers us a way of grasping this element of interaction as a component of what he called 'fascistisation', a focus on the fascistic direction of a group, regime or in this case, individual. He does this by emphasising that while in the study of fascism 'more traditional conservatives constitute a special subset because of their seeming proximity to fascism on some key issues', it was the meeting of these ideas with the turbulent effects of the 1920s and 1930s which

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939: Parties Ideology and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) p.7

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.7-10

<sup>60</sup> Dan Stone, *Responses to Nazism, 1933-1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p.159

produced an identifiable politic called fascism.<sup>61</sup> Roberts attempts to bring this emphasis on fluidity and contingency to palingenesis by supposing an intrinsic dexterity within fascism which can only be extirpated by acknowledging the ‘fluidity and uncertainty of the time’.<sup>62</sup> In essence, ‘fascistisation’ can help us track Lymington’s journey into a fascist political realm by focusing on the social formation which undergirded his worldview and the historical context he met, producing via this dialectic a fascistic political philosophy.

Lymington can be considered one of the ‘traditional conservatives’ Roberts spoke of, and so a fundamental aspect of his politics which influenced his journey to fascism. We must be briefly turn to empire, a vital aspect of Lymington’s worldview. Throughout this study Lymington’s concerns over the British Empire consistently come to the fore. While he was born in Wyoming, Lymington was also born into an English aristocratic family with ancestry stretching back to the Norman Conquest of England. His father, and grandfather, took seats in the English House of Lords and control of the Earldom of Portsmouth. As such, Lymington’s familial and formal education, which he completed in Britain up to university level, was firmly set in the terms of English identity. He understood himself as English, as his writings show, and thus never obtained much loyalty to his birth country. His worldview was entirely one moulded in the context of English aristocracy and English traditions and customs. Indeed, his entire ideological edifice was sat at its epistemological substratum in British imperial culture. Consequently, this study has attempted to identify Lymington’s commitment to British imperialism and the challenges which came with that as a vital part of his political journey to fascism.

Some of those within the ‘cultural turn’ of fascist studies placed particular emphasis on the imperial context of British fascism. Martin Pugh, in the *Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, evinced the traditional focuses of British fascism and instead opted to suggest ‘Britain had a pre-fascist tradition’, placing an emphasis on the connection between British fascism and imperialism.<sup>63</sup> In fact, Pugh directly points to groupings of imperialists, such as the milieu of Viscount Lymington and other committed imperialists like Sir Patrick Hannon, as fertile grounds for the growth of fascism.<sup>64</sup> In her work on women, gender and fascism, Julie Gottlieb also pointed to the imperialism of British fascism and the potential study of it, suggesting ample ground for the study of British fascism’s ‘imperial consciousness’.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, in his approach to the relationship between the BUF and Australia, Evan Smith

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<sup>61</sup> David D. Roberts, *Fascist Interactions: Proposals for a New Approach to Fascism and its Era, 1919-1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016) p.61

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.61-63

<sup>63</sup> Martin Pugh, ‘Britain and its Empire’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Fascism*, ed. R. J. B. Bosworth (Oxford: 2009) pp.491-494

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> Julie Gottlieb, ‘Women and British Fascism Revisited: Gender, the Far-Right, and Resistance’, *Journal of Women’s History*, Vol.16 No.3 (2004) p.113

focused directly on the BUF's imperial element, including their adulation of Australian Settler-Colonialism.<sup>66</sup> This study intends to follow Smith in understanding British fascism as an 'imperial form of fascism' and 'indebted to the legacy of British colonialism'.<sup>67</sup> Given Britain's imperial hegemony, its political culture was saturated with imperial ambition and presupposition. Thus, British fascism was inevitably imperial, and racial, in nature. Consequently, Lymington's variant of English fascism was also hinged on the existence of racial empire.

Paul Stocker recently provided a novel study of the imperial policy of British fascist organisations, and suggested empire did not hold a central position in the politics of British fascists but was rather a 'frame'.<sup>68</sup> Liam Liburd responded to Stocker's analysis and pointed out that Stocker treated 'the British far-right as a species apart with an esoteric ideology more or less entirely separate from British political traditions.'<sup>69</sup> Liburd retains, that for British fascists, imperialism was for more than just a 'frame'. As we can see in Lymington's dynamic politics, he arrives at the fascist landscape holding a traditional belief in the superiority of the British Empire. Indeed, he moved amongst minds which were both fascist and Conservative, but which were both operating wholly within the British imperial culture of the inter-war period. As Edward Said stated of the hierarchical nature of imperial culture:

'Imperialism is a system...Life in one subordinate realm of experience is imprinted by the fictions and follies of the dominant realm. But the reverse is true, too, as experience in the dominant society comes to depend uncritically on natives and their territories perceived as in need of *la mission civilisatrice*.'<sup>70</sup>

Said emphasised in *Culture and Imperialism* that 'imperialism's culture was not invisible' and that it was, and is, a 'prevailing discourse'.<sup>71</sup> Or, to turn briefly to the work of Stuart Hall. 'culture always has a material existence – not as a collection of discrete texts or standalone artefacts but as the key instance of the social formation in which emergent forces first make their presence felt as they come up against dominant and residual blocs of established authority.'<sup>72</sup> For Lymington, a traditional Conservative who travelled into the fascist landscape, empire was the political connective tissue, a racial-imperial canvas on which his worldview would be sketched. Liburd shows

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<sup>66</sup> Evan Smith, 'The Pivot of Empire: Australia and the Imperial Fascism of the British Union of Fascists', *History Australia*, Vol.14 No.3 (2017) p.393

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.393-395

<sup>68</sup> Paul Stocker, *Lost Imperium*, p.3

<sup>69</sup> Liam J. Liburd, 'Turn Again, Fascist Studies: New Perspectives on British Fascism' *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol.32 No.3 (2021) p.464

<sup>70</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p.xix

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1-3

<sup>72</sup> Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (eds) *Stuart Hall: Selected Writings on Race and Difference* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021) p.10

how, much like Lymington, British fascists ‘drew heavily on earlier constructions of racialised imperial masculinity’.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Lymington also ‘borrowed from late Victorian and Edwardian imperial discourse.’<sup>74</sup> Liburd points to instances in which the BUF attempted to revive an ‘imperial spirit’, and strong parallels can be found in Lymington’s magazine, *New Pioneer*. In this magazine, Lymington on numerous occasions decried the ‘defeatism’ which had led to the ‘crumbling of all imperial policy’.<sup>75</sup> To remedy this, Lymington attempted a rallying cry in the face of perceived imperial decline:

‘Here, and in the Dominions, men conscious that their destiny is not at an end, are crying for hope, for leadership and decision, based on faith and purpose in our will to survive. We cannot, and will not, give in.’<sup>76</sup>

The ‘destiny’ Lymington saw for his ‘Anglo-Saxon people’ was racial-imperial rule. Evidently, Lymington’s worldview was one which was not only embedded in a British imperial culture, but one which saw the re-energisation and defence of the British Empire as a necessary political position. For this, alongside his other positions, as we shall later see, Lymington attracted the support of Britain’s most ardent and extreme fascists and imperialists.

Accompanying Lymington’s imperial discourse was race. This can be seen throughout his political corpus. To understand the depth to which this operated, beyond the somatic, as an organising principle, this study turns to Stuart Hall. Particularly, in the third Chapter. While the most explicit mode of racism in the early twentieth century was a scientific, biological and eugenicist one, this was not the only one, nor the only place race-making occurred. Lymington did, absolutely, express a strong attachment to ‘biological’ racism. ‘Race’, however, can be found operating in other facets of Lymington’s political expressions. As Chapter Three elucidates, antiquated and occultic terms like ‘taste’ and ‘service’, amongst others, were words used by the Mystery and Array. These conceal, however, what Hall termed ‘race as discursive construct, a sliding signifier.’ That is to say, racial constructions were hidden behind discursive signifiers such as ‘taste’. While Lymington perceived biological race as received wisdom, by bringing Stuart Hall to the table this study attempts to animate race as a primary element of Lymington’s political discourse. Hall helps to highlight, in essence, that race was for Lymington and his peers, like imperialism, an organising principle of his worldview. This did not pre-determine Lymington’s journey into fascism, but was integral to it.

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<sup>73</sup> Liam J. Liburd, ‘Beyond the Pale’, p.276

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> *New Pioneer*, Vol. No.2, January 1939, p.39

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

In 1977, Lymington can be found in a study of the intellectual origins of the British Union of Fascists. Neill Nugent cast him in this study as a prototype of British fascism. He saw Lymington as a contributor to its development, a 'precursor and inspirer' of the logics contained in the fascism of the BUF.<sup>77</sup> This was swiftly followed by Kenneth Lunn and Richard Thurlow's collection of essays on British fascism and the Radical Right. Lymington's 'ubiquitous' activities, his professed vision of a self-sufficient Britain alongside a rural regeneration and his advocacy were all accounted for by Philip Rees, who alongside Nugent placed Lymington firmly within the British fascist landscape.<sup>78</sup> These preceded Richard Griffiths's 1983 study on those who expressed a profound 'pro-Germanism' or 'pro-fascism' across a range of political and cultural individuals and organisations. Griffiths was perhaps one of the first scholars to give Lymington sustained scholarly treatment.

Griffiths was intent on studying those, usually in connection with but not exclusive to, the pro-German appeasers. Thus, it is not until 1938 that Griffiths suggests Lymington became of interest to his area. Presenting Lymington as both one of a group of 'agricultural philosophers' and of a High Tory movement infatuated with continental authoritarianism, Griffiths identifies Lymington as deeply concerned with the ramifications of 'progress' and intent on a racial 'Anglo-Saxon' revival.<sup>79</sup> His journalistic activities, being a contributor to the *English Review*, as well as his complete disillusionment with democracy are also included.<sup>80</sup> Griffiths was led to Lymington because of his activities in and the milieu around the English Mystery and the English Array, as well as his own journalistic publication *The New Pioneer*. While not neglecting the broad picture of the political espousals of these groups, their pro-German attitudes are what attracts the most focus. Indeed, the racial outlook of Sanderson and the Mystery was noted, however the English Array's interest in Germany and Lymington's view that war with Germany or Italy was suicidal are what was highlighted.<sup>81</sup> By extension, Lymington's group The British Council Against European Commitments was included, its view (expressed by Lymington) that war in Europe could benefit no one but 'Jews and communists' again emphasized.<sup>82</sup> The publication *The New Pioneer* was understood

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<sup>77</sup> Neill Nugent, 'The Ideas of the BUF' in N. Nugent and R. King (eds), *The British Right* (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1977) pp.134-160.

<sup>78</sup> Philip Rees, 'Changing Interpretations of British Fascism: A Bibliographical Survey' in Kenneth Lunn and Richard C. Thurlow (eds) *British Fascism: Essays on the Radical Right in Inter-War Britain* (London: Routledge, 1980) pp.196-199.

<sup>79</sup> Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travellers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany 1933-1939* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 1983) pp.317-321.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22; p.319.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.318-320.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p.323.

by Griffiths as anti-Semitic, and that it suggested so much sympathy for Nazism and Fascism that it had to defend itself by stating it was not pro-Nazi but 'pro-British'.<sup>83</sup>

Griffith's study remains influential and informative in British history and particularly fascist studies. However, he approaches fascism and the variants of 'pro-Germanism' in Britain as separate phenomena. That, fascism was essentially European political force, particularly rooted in its Italian and German manifestations. Thus, it could not arise domestically in Britain, and consequently figures much like Lymington who hold central ideological tenets of fascism, as well as openly professing a deep interest in and support of their regimes, are simply fans of the fascist landscape instead of engaged with it themselves. The transnational element to fascism and the possibility of native fascisms are pushed from view and reduced to the subject being pro-regime. The view that that fascism was an external politic to Britain and could not be adopted or constructed along politics more established in Britain was a common one until recently. As shall be soon shown, the idea that the BUF was the only fascist party in Britain and that fascism was an imported phenomenon in that case is a view that has since been rejected by much contemporary scholarship on British fascism.

There was then Richard Thurlow's 1998 book *British Fascism*. Thurlow pulled no punches in asserting how irrelevant British fascism was in his mind, writing early in the text 'rarely can such an apparently insignificant topic have been responsible for such an outpouring of ink.'<sup>84</sup> This did not, however, stop Thurlow completing almost 300 pages on the topic. Thurlow approached fascism in Britain through two lenses. The first was in relation with the state. The chapters on the inter-war period revolved almost exclusively around the activities of the British Union of Fascists and their impact on public order, and then the reaction of the British state to this, analyzing a substantial number of surveillance and state security files on the BUF. The second lens also connected to fascism's relation with the state, except here Thurlow peered through an electoral lens to conclude fascism has made little headway in Britain, and this was made especially clear in the last chapter titled 'Terminal Decline'.<sup>85</sup> As in his coverage of the inter-war period Thurlow focuses largely on the BUF with some material on the British Fascisti, groups like Lymington's English Mystery and English Array were scarcely mentioned, with Lymington himself only popping up a few times. Lymington first appears as part of the appeasement movement, and Thurlow labelled the British Council Against European Commitments a 'pseudo left-wing' peace organization. Pointing out an alliance between John Beckett's National Socialist League and Lymington's English Array, Thurlow presented a

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.328.

<sup>84</sup> Richard Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain: From Oswald Mosley Blackshirts to The National Front* (London: I B. Tauris, 1998) p.X.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp.268-277.



small part of the extensive far right and fascist network existed beyond the BUF, in which Lymington was an important player.<sup>86</sup> Furthering this point, Thurlow pointed to the grouping of British fascist A. K. Chesterton, John Beckett and Lymington and the latter's creation *The New Pioneer*. Describing their outpourings as a 'mix of pro-German, anti-Semitic and economic reform articles', Thurlow was not unaware of Lymington's network nor the radicalism of his politics. Because, however, his organisations were not directly confronting the state nor operating through the BUF they were not covered extensively. The English Mistery was understood by Thurlow as being Rolf Gardiner's movement and he described it as a 'native' folkish movement.<sup>87</sup> The English Mistery cannot be said to be Gardiner's movement, and although he operated around and sometimes attended the group's meetings, it is unclear whether he was a member. As for Lymington himself, Thurlow recognizes him as, in a similar vein to Griffiths, an extreme 'fellow-traveler'.<sup>88</sup> This is supported by Lymington's attendance at a meeting in 1932 over the merging of Mosley's New Party and Francis Hawking's British fascists, the latter of which he came to have close contact with.<sup>89</sup>

British fascism was then subject to the study of Thomas Linehan. Linehan caught onto an interesting 'turn' developing in fascist studies, and that is the accounting for cultural aspects of fascist movements but also their interactions with and, perhaps, place within, British culture. Thus, Linehan's text is an interesting exposition of what were at the time unexplored avenues in the analysis of British fascism. Fascism was not treated in this text as purely a European phenomenon, but one that had origins in Britain's own cultural and political traditions, and it was the meeting of these with the 'fascist epoch' that gave rise to British fascism. The following quotation is revealing in this regard 'the origins of British fascism should not only be sought in ideas and intellectual currents... other forces and tendencies in society, of a social, economic, technological, political and cultural nature, contributed to its emergence, nourished its growth and shaped its subsequent development.'<sup>90</sup> Linehan's interest in Lymington began with the latter's movement within the 'pro-Hitler' sections of the appeasement movement. After describing several pillars of Lymington's politics, such as anti-Semitism, rural revivalism and a romantic anti-urbanism, Linehan described Lymington's organizations and publications as holding a 'curious ideological mix of the absurd and the sinister' which 'reflected Viscount Lymington's own sinister ideology.'<sup>91</sup> Linehan, like

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.141.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p.150.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., pp.154-155.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939: Parties Ideology and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) p.13.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., pp.140-141

Thurlow, approached Lymington as a character of import in the late 1930s Hitlerite appeasement movement in Britain, connecting Lymington with a variety of outright pro-Nazi groups in the late 1930s, such as the anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi British People's Party, which Lymington joined.<sup>92</sup> With both Thurlow and Linehan, however, Lymington was approached as a force already cemented in the far-right of late-1930s Britain, his journey to and position within that milieu were not illuminated.

Linehan's text was a sign of the turn mentioned earlier within fascist studies, one that looked to expand the horizon of fascist studies to include fascist interactions with culture or, indeed, the culture of fascism itself. Perhaps the key text representing this turn is a paper by Roger Griffin, who following his earlier definition of fascism as 'palingenetic ultra-nationalism' suggested the field had decided to adopt a more cultural outlook. This was the result, in Griffin's view, of an 'emergent consensus, or at least a growing convergence of approaches, between the more theoretically orientated political scientists and the more empirically inclined historians'.<sup>93</sup> After responding to a variety of debates within fascist studies and, indeed, critiques of his own work (particularly those of David Renton), Griffin set out a vision that economics nor 'even politics' should be of central importance to fascist studies, but intellectual and 'cultural expression'.<sup>94</sup> While separating the political and the cultural would be a difficult task, as culture is often where contestations over power are fought, as well as the fact that fascism is never produced from political processes alone, this paper signifies an (albeit loose) agreement among anglophone scholars of fascism that cultural and intellectual currents driving fascist organization should be taken seriously. One scholar to adopt this approach and give Lymington and his movements the most sustained and detailed treatment within fascist studies to date, is Dan Stone, to whom we now return.

Dan Stone released in the early 2000s work relevant to this study, and included it handily in a single text, the topic of which was (broadly) British attitudes and reactions to Nazism.<sup>95</sup> Now, while the review of literature herein has followed a chronological order, a recent text (2018) published by Stone will also be brought into play, as to present his views of relevant matters cohesively. In his first encounter with Lymington, Stone set out to delve into the history and ideas of Lymington's close friend, Anthony Ludovici, as part of a great exposition of British eugenics. Here, Stone unearthed a close relationship between forms of prototypical fascist ideals and Nietzschean eugenics. To do this, Stone placed his study against 'a cultural background' that indicates fascistic politics penetrated deeper

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., pp.140-142.

<sup>93</sup> Roger Griffin, 'The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (Or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies', *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol.37 No.1 (2002) pp.21-43 (p.23).

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., pp.25-28, pp.41-43.

<sup>95</sup> Dan Stone, 'The English Mystery, the BUF and the Dilemmas of British Fascism' *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.75 No.2 (2003) pp.336-358.

and wider across British society than ‘the simple high-political record of British fascism suggests’.<sup>96</sup> This led Stone to describe certain ideals and views as ‘native’ to Britain, eliding the view suggested by scholars like Griffiths that fascism’s intellectual undercurrents were necessarily European in origin. By focusing on throughout the book on the topic of eugenics, Stone illuminated the necessary connections British eugenics had with racial outlooks and fears of societal and civilizational decline, and even posited the origins of an envisioned ‘lethal chamber’ firmly within esoteric elements of the British eugenic movement.<sup>97</sup> Ludovici’s own sinister advocacy for a murderous eugenic system and his profound and conspiratorial concerns over English racial health were also covered throughout.

Most pertinent to this study is Stone’s approaches to Lymington and his organisations, which Stone placed firmly in the realm of his suggested native proto-fascist ideas. Stone did this by suggesting a concept he calls ‘extremes of Englishness’, which he used to understand a collective group of actors and their ideas, which ‘indicate channels of thinking that, when combined, add up to an indigenous proto-fascism.’ Lymington’s rural revivalism was part of these strains of proto fascism.<sup>98</sup> So too were William Sanderson’s ‘vision of an organic society dedicated to service’, Ludovici’s call for a ‘masculine renaissance and others, including defense of empire, ‘National Toryism’, anti-Semitism and anti-feminism.’<sup>99</sup> Stone set out a border between many of the individuals he discussed and the fascist landscape, instead focusing on intellectual proliferations between the two and did not place most figures discussed in the realm of fascism. Two exceptions to this, which Stone stated, were Lymington and his compatriot Ludovici.<sup>100</sup> Stone’s approach to Lymington began with the English Mistery, as Ludovici was also part of the group. The ideas of the English Mistery were represented as ‘radicalized extensions of some of those advocated by Tory revivalists of the Edwardian radical right.’<sup>101</sup> Such ideas were listed as ‘instinct’, racial health and race-memory, duty, and ‘service’ to the nation. Indeed, as shall also be shown in this study, the policies the Mistery forwarded were for a transcendent notion of the nation to which everything was subservient.

Stone understood the English Array as devoting itself to ‘more and more anti-Semitism.’<sup>102</sup> Stone noted how Lymington’s activities in the late 1930s ‘widened his contacts on the right’, incorporating former BUF members William Joyce, A. K. Chesterton, John Beckett, and General J. F. C. Fuller. Stone suggested these figures and

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<sup>96</sup> Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002) pp.1-4.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.115-121.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1-7

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49.

their connections to Lymington, and the English Array gave the latter a seriousness the Mistery never obtained.<sup>103</sup> Stone developed in *Breeding Superman* a useful tool for British fascism studies and this study, as the ‘extremes of Englishness’ concept can be utilized to link the ideas of someone like Lymington not only to contemporary ideals of the far-right and British fascism, but also to pre-war politics.

Stone expanded this the following year, and here gave Lymington a central place in a further development of ‘extremes of Englishness’ as well as a new conceptual variant of fascism, which Stone called ‘organo-fascism’. The latter is defined as ‘distaste at modern farming methods, combined with a romanticized image of the landscape and a fear of its pollution by urban cosmopolitans and unhealthy immigrants. Their attitude rests on a fundamentally aesthetic concept of society, a notion of ‘sound taste’, ‘right values’ and ‘good breeding’ that tolerates no notion of difference and rests on a belief in the need for aristocrat leadership, cultural homogeneity and racial purity. Their panegyrics to the English landscape brought all these together.’<sup>104</sup> Stone tracks Lymington’s activities in and around the inter-war far-right and fascist realm, noting various journalistic endeavors and offering particular focus on ‘proto-fascist’ ideals present in the English Mistery and English Array. Stone’s analysis of Lymington and his organisations stem from a methodological break from much of the preceding studies on British fascism. Indeed, at the beginning of *Breeding Fascism* he notes the need for scholars to reject the idea that Britain had a natural immunity to fascism and that any found was both irrelevant and imported. This methodological break and the subsequent view of Lymington’s milieu as organic fascists of some variety represent an important development in the historiography of British fascism and is the origin of a developing historiographical debate within which this study can be placed.

Stone is useful here as he not only lays some key groundwork for further study of Lymington, such as tracking and framing Lymington’s political ideology and pointing to some key links Lymington had in the later 1930s with prominent organisations and figures, fascist or otherwise. The concept of ‘extremes of Englishness’ is also useful in understanding the historical and ideological bedrock on which groups like the Array sat. This work is important to this study and will hopefully be used for further study of Lymington’s and his milieu. Where this study aims to go beyond Stone is to show exactly how Lymington traversed the 1930s and how, by the end of the decade, his politics had calcified into a fascist form, and how this interacted with various other actors within that milieu. While Stone has covered Lymington in detail, the broader project in which Lymington is included is one which examines responses to Nazism and, much like Thurlow and Linehan, focuses on Lymington’s activities in the late

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Dan Stone, *Responses to Nazism in Britain 1933-1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p.157.

1930s. As the title of this study suggests, Lymington is understood here to have ‘travelled’ into the realm of fascist politics and it is that ‘journey’ which is thus under examination.

Following Stone, Richard Moore-Colyer turned to the fascist farmer and BUF member Jorian Jenks for further study of British fascism’s organic elements. The fundamental task of Moore-Colyer’s paper was to ‘outline details of the rural policy of the BUF and in so doing to highlight aspects of the career of Jorian E. F. Jenks (1899-1963) who was not only the architect of that policy, but was to become a leading player in the Soil Association between 1947 and his death in 1963.’<sup>105</sup> Moore-Colyer divided the fascist realm of inter-war Britain into two sections ‘Mosleyite’ and ‘non-Mosleyite’. While of course Jenks and the BUF are placed in the former, Lymington, Sanderson and the English Mistery are placed in the latter. These were important to Moore-Colyer because the BUF was ‘probably influenced by the thoughts and writings of members of the Mistery and Array’ and Lymington is understood as ‘an important behind the scenes figure’.<sup>106</sup> Despite the disconnecting of non-Mosleyite variants of fascism from Mosleyite fascism, Moore-Colyer described Lymington as a ‘reactionary Conservative’, as engineering *The New Pioneer* as an ‘organicist, eugenicist and anti-Semitic mouthpiece for the ultra-right’, and as more anti-Semitic than pro-Nazi.<sup>107</sup> There is also present in Moore-Colyer’s study interesting points made about how ‘non-Mosleyites’ saw and interacted with formal organizational fascism like the BUF, namely how they were skeptical of the one-man dictatorship suggested by Italian fascism, an unquestionable influence upon Mosley. This stemmed from Lymington and his compatriots focus on absolute monarchy as the ideal mode of government, the need for a total aristocratic revival, as well as their overriding valorization of the nation as the imagined community, not individual, to be served. There was also emphasized in this work a substantial amount of proliferation between the organic mindset of Lymington and his peers and the BUF, such as self-sufficiency, a type of ‘blood and soil’ relationship between race and land, as well as skepticism of imported goods. The proliferation of ideas between bodies considered by Moore-Colyer as ‘non-Mosleyite’ and the rest of the political spectrum was a task then taken up in the following year by Martin Pugh, the next scholar who produced work relevant here.

A central theme in Pugh’s 2005 book was the variety of interactions and intellectual proliferation between fascist individuals and groups, and the right flank of the Conservative party. Notable points of convergence and exchange Pugh locates are the January Club, a BUF construct to allow for meetings with notable Conservative figures, as

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<sup>105</sup> Richard Moore-Colyer, ‘Towards ‘Mother-Earth’: Jorian Jenks, Organicism, the Right and the British Union of Fascists’, *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 39 No. 3 (2004) pp.353-371 (p.353).

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p.354.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.355-356.

well as its successor the January Club, as well as the BUF's interactions with notable press barons and aristocrats like Lord Rothermere and Lord Londonderry.<sup>108</sup> This led Pugh to set out the thesis that the 'example of Britain underlines the dangers of trying to identify too rigidly the boundaries between fascism and other adjacent ideologies'.<sup>109</sup> Pugh also contended that fascism should be seen as a potentially domestic phenomena and the proposal it was a snatched European politic is problematic. This is where Pugh approached Lymington and his organisations. Lymington's peers and his organisations were seen by Pugh as an 'authentically English expression of fascism', and 'a warning against seeing fascism as an aberration or an importation in Britain.'<sup>110</sup> In this sense Pugh was in line with Stone's identification of a proto-fascism or indigenous fascism in the politics of Lymington. Pugh located these politics in the meeting ground of fascism and the back-to-the-land movement, and highlights their monarchical and aristocratic revival, fears over miscegenation, anti-Semitism, anti-urbanism, and racial regeneration. In this sense, Pugh posited that as 'in some ways these organisations represented a logical development from the Edwardian Radical Right and from late-Victorian ideas about revitalizing rural life.'<sup>111</sup> Pugh also spent time linking Lymington with a variety of other fascist groups as well as journalists and state figures, particularly his involvements with diehard Conservatives and groups intent on defending the British empire.<sup>112</sup> Thus, Pugh painted a picture of Lymington that not only presents him as an important figure in the far-right and fascist scene with an impressive array of contacts, but that he and his organizations' politics should be an important consideration when assessing the history of British fascism.

The activities of Lymington on what Julia Stapleton called 'the fascist fringe' were then revisited five years after Pugh's text. In Stapleton's assessment of the historian Arthur Bryant, another member of the Mystery and the Array, we again find Lymington. Stapleton's examination of Bryant essentially tracked his relationship with continental fascism and his eventual reluctance to admit his support of it in the post-war period, following his rather passionate endorsements of Nazi Germany in the late 1930s, while working alongside Lymington. Lymington can be found in Stapleton's study as praising Bryant's suggestion that Nazism contributed 'highly' to western civilization.<sup>113</sup> Stapleton noted the work of Dan Stone on Lymington and uses that work as a platform for

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<sup>108</sup> Martin Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts!': Fascists and Fascism in Britain Between the Wars* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005) pp.126-140.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p.6

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., pp.71.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., pp.177-180.

<sup>113</sup> Julia Stapleton, 'The Limits of Pro-Fascism and Anti-Fascism: G. K. Chesterton and Arthur Bryant', in Nigel Copsey and Andrzej Olechnowicz (eds) *Varieties of Anti-Fascism: Britain in the inter-War Period* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp.232-233.

her own understanding. Lymington's advocacy of a 'pan-Saxon/Aryan enthusiasm' was also noted, and interestingly Stapleton suggested this was a point of departure for Bryant.<sup>114</sup> In this work, an example of the now extensive examinations some of Lymington's peers have been afforded, we find the importance of the balancing of patriotism and pro-fascism underlined. Indeed, as in this study, we later see Lymington struggle to balance his sympathy for Nazism with his own British patriotism as war approached. This adds an interesting dimension to Pugh and Stone's suggestion of an organic fascism, namely if such a thing existed how did its proponents balance it their British nationalism, a key element of any British fascist, with their support of seemingly 'foreign' fascisms.

One scholar that approached this and the broader question of an indigenous fascism is Bernhard Dietz. Outlining a revaluation of Pugh and Stone's contentions in 2012, Dietz rejected their ideas of an indigenous fascism and instead posited the label of 'Neo-Tories'. This book, in relation to this study, is an alternative to Stone and Pugh in the emergent historiographical debate, raising important questions over Lymington and his milieu. Dietz departed from Stone and Pugh in as much as the fascists they identify, in his mind, would be more appropriately categorised as a radical wing of the Conservative party. He described these Neo-Tories, Lymington being one in Dietz's view, as being 'young politicians or intellectuals who concerned themselves with a radical new intention for conservatism', that they 'cannot be understood in terms of the fascist concept' and were 'seeking fundamental change from the political developments of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.'<sup>115</sup> Dietz identified a number of ideological attributes of these Neo-Tories, many of which are also accepted by and presented in the works of other scholars already mentioned. Dietz made additional points about the rejection of a whiggish interpretation of history and that many of these Neo-Tories rejected liberalism because it seemingly allowed the danger of communism to arise and thus democracy could no longer sustain itself.<sup>116</sup> As for Lymington, Dietz understood him as one of the influx of young Neo-Tories beginning their parliamentary career in 1929, and remarks 'in historical terms Lymington is an extremely interesting character among the journalistic-political grouping on the right wing of the Conservative party.'<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, Dietz questioned Stone's concept of an indigenous British fascism and its usefulness, and identified two main problems with the theses of Stone and Pugh. They both revolve around Dietz's conception of fascism. The first is his view that the English Mistery and English Array, which he acknowledged several of these Neo-Tories were members of, envisioned a society too decentralised to ever be

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.236.

<sup>115</sup> Bernhard Dietz, *Neo-Tories: The Revolt of British Conservatives against Democracy and Political Modernity (1929-1939)* trans. Ian Copestake (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012) pp.1-5.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., pp.206-209.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p.24.

considered fascist, that their idea of a cultural and political ‘cell system’ permeating Britain was not the cogent structure necessary for fascism.<sup>118</sup> The second was that the unrivalled leader present in European fascism and Nazism would have been unthinkable to Neo-Tories. It is not made clear what exactly the differences are between the ultimate leader of European fascism and the absolute monarchism espoused by some British fascists. Dietz signifies a departure in the historical scholarship on Lymington from prior scholars and he openly rejected the suggestions of Pugh and Stone, opening a gap for this study. Dietz is too harsh with his demarcations, however. In separating Lymington from the landscape of fascism and placing him in the new label of Neo-Tories, the contingency and fluidity of the ‘various permutations’ of fascism are elided. It would be a mistake for this study to swing too far the other way and suggest fascism is incompatible with Neo-Toryism, or that Lymington did not move between the two. On the contrary, Lymington seems to fit the bill of both fascist and ‘Neo-Tory’, showing the issues of drawing the conceptual lines between fascism and other ideological variants too harshly. It was, as the example of Lymington indicates, possible to be engaged with both English Neo-Toryism and English fascism.

Another intervention into this debate can be found in the work of N. C. Fleming, who in his work placed Lymington firmly within the bounds of a radical diehard Conservatism. The work presenting a history of Conservatism and its radical or extreme strains between 1900 and 1940, covered Lymington’s time as an M. P. and involvement with groups intent on preserving the hegemony of the British empire. Fleming suggested that the diehard’s role within the Conservative party is given less attention, wrongly, than links between the diehards and the extreme right. Indeed, Fleming wrote there ‘is a tendency in these works to give undue prominence to exceptional cases, such as Lymington’s abandonment of conventional party politics, to draw inferences from speeches given by the diehards which appear to defend or excuse Nazi Germany and the British Union of Fascists, or to give attention to individuals, especially peers, with little or no political standing in the Conservative party let alone influence over the Conservative governments.’<sup>119</sup>

We have here a lens which gives primacy to state and high political power and less focus on intellectual or conceptual cross-overs. Fleming responds to Pugh’s suggestion of this cross-over by locating the formal membership of two Conservatives and fascist groups and concluding this means Pugh must be questioned. Furthermore, Fleming suggested that the endorsement of fascist ideals and various connections with fascist movements does not mean diehards like Lymington had ‘ideological approval for fascism...the racial slurs

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., pp.2-10.

<sup>119</sup> N. C. Fleming, *Britannia’s Zealots, Volume I: Tradition, Empire and the Forging of the Conservative Right* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) p.138.



employed by the diehards, to oppose alien immigration and self-government in the empire, reflected in most cases their unashamed cultural provincialism than any systemised racist doctrine.’<sup>120</sup> Lymington was instead understood by Fleming to be in the ‘extreme right’ and as hankering after a regenerative Toryism in the ‘relative obscurity of esoteric, back-to-the-land’ politics.<sup>121</sup> When assessing a ‘systemised racist doctrine’ in British politics it is important to recall, as Fleming does not, that work that has been done by many scholars on the racial underpinnings of early twentieth century liberal democracy and, as well, the imperial racial backdrop colouring the thought of British fascists and Conservatives alike in the 1930s. Fleming’s demarcation on these lines appears arbitrary and, on the contrary, a ‘systemised racist doctrine’ is not a distinctive feature of fascist politics when seen through a comparative lens that, as scholars like Martin Blinkhorn shows, account for wider trends in European politics.<sup>122</sup>

The most recent work by a scholar of British fascism which encounters Lymington is another author whose work is drawn upon in multiple ways for this study, and Graham Macklin’s 2020 text *Failed Fuhrers*. A prosopography or biographical catalogue of important figures in the post-war British extreme right, this study also provided methodological tools useful to this study discussed shortly. Macklin does not include Lymington in any great detail but did describe him and Sanderson as ‘blood and soil ruralists’. This is despite ‘their ecological preoccupations being an important tributary to British fascism’, but as they ‘did not lead any political organisations of any great note’ they are not included beyond this.<sup>123</sup> Macklin’s inclusion of Lymington and acknowledgment that his activities contributed to the development of British fascism in some capacity and, when placed alongside the previous works here discussed, gives a level of prominence to Lymington in both organic and fascist circles of study that permits a historical investigation of his activities.

What this study attempts to address, broadly, is twofold. Drawing from the gaps in the literature and the disputations between scholars like Dietz, Fleming, Stone and Pugh, it is clear that studying a figure like Lymington can lead into controversies over British fascism’s possible indigeneity and thus the nature of fascism itself. That is partly the attraction of studying a figure like Lymington, however offering an interjection into the historiographical debates over the nature of fascism is not the objective here. Rather, the task at hand is to trace Lymington’s political evolution from a young aristocratic parliamentarian into, by the end of the 1930s, the

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p.141.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.170.

<sup>122</sup> Martin Blinkhorn (ed), *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 1990) pp.5-9; Liam J. Liburd, ‘Beyond the Pale: Whiteness, Masculinity and Empire in the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940, *Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, Vol.7 (2018) pp.275-296.

<sup>123</sup> Graham Macklin, *Failed Fuhrers: A History of Britain’s Extreme Right* (London: Routledge, 2020) p.5.

shadowy world of British fascism. Of course, the political traditions that pre-existed Lymington and from which he drew cannot be ignored. However, it is the development of these politics in the context of his 1930s, of economic depression, the decline of British imperialism and of course the rise of fascism, and Lymington's response to them, which allow his journey into the fascist realm to be traced. Secondly, Lymington can be used to illuminate the corners of the British fascist landscape which existed outside of the purview of the BUF. Understudied figures such as Anthony Ludovici feature heavily in this study, but as we shall see, they were by no means irrelevant to British politics of the trajectories of British fascism. Lymington, this study argues, should be considered a fascist fellow traveller that journeyed from high politics and society to, between 1929 and 1945, the world of fascist politics in which he obtained considerable popularity and platform. During this journey, he retained an impressive range of contacts in the press, parliament, and political organisations that, by 1938, aided in cementing Lymington's position as a popular ideologue and contributor to the history of British fascism itself. Macklin's method of collective biography to reconstruct an image of British fascism, a prosopographical reconstruction of what the development of post-war British fascism looks like, is a useful one. If one was to complete a similar reconstruction of the development of inter-war British fascism, Lymington would be a fundamental component of such a depiction.

### Methodology

This study is historical in nature. Utilizing archival findings from the Lymington collection in the Hampshire Record Office as well as others from the National Archives at Kew, and the British Library, it will attempt to reconstruct both the intellectual development and movements of its subject, Viscount Lymington. It will present largely as a historical tracing-cum-biography, attempting to stay in a reasonably close orbit around Lymington. Graham Macklin's recent collection of biographies on British fascists offers a useful frame and method. Macklin sets out his method in the early pages of his book, and writes that 'biography serves us here as an analytical prism through which the broader ideological and organizational contours of the British fascist tradition, as it evolved over several generations, are refracted.'<sup>124</sup> Macklin seeks a 'broader contextual contemplation' of the political and cultural arenas in which his subjects ideas were disseminated, and focuses 'on the role of these individuals within the broader racial nationalist milieu', which 'can help illuminate the broader historical processes which they helped to shape and which shaped them.'<sup>125</sup> Drawing from this, this study will focus on Lymington, but as we shall see, he is not the only figure this study devotes attention to. He was, as the literature above suggests, a

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<sup>124</sup> Macklin, *Failed Fuhrers*, p.2.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

ubiquitous figure with multiple contacts and spheres of influence. It would be reductive as well as near impossible to study Lymington as a lone figure. Thus, using Macklin, Lymington acts here as ‘analytical prism’ through which his immediate intellectual surroundings can be seen; far-right organicism, diehard Conservative and fascist interactions, the English Mistery and English Array, as well as figures like Anthony Ludovici, William Sanderson and Rolf Gardiner. The historical matrix Lymington existed in was one which many figures travelled through and that he interacted with, and was in some cases, intimately ideologically intertwined. To fully grasp Lymington’s character, the archival collection used here often illuminates his interactions with these other figures. This will aid us here in synthesizing Lymington’s politics, as expressed in correspondence as well as books and journals, as well as peering into understudied elements of the historical British far-right like the English Mistery and Array, which were in many ways where Lymington’s ideas manifested. By the end of this study, hopefully, Lymington’s journey into British fascism can be comprehensively, if perhaps not definitively, tracked.

As for biography as a method, Macklin pointed out that it had long been met with skepticism by historians. Indeed, it only takes a brief glance at literature in the twentieth century to see biography as a rather unfashionable historical tool. This was because, in part, biography began as a life writing program to venerate national figures. As Stephen Koss wrote, there was a ‘long tradition of politicians who have written biography to pay homage to their ideological forbears, and, implicitly, justify their own conduct.’<sup>126</sup> However, since Koss was writing in the 1970s about biography best applied to a Carlylean ‘great man theory’ version of biographical writing, the field of history has somewhat changed its attitude. Now, the field is generally in acceptance, with several different scholars of historical method publishing pieces in support of the genre.<sup>127</sup> There have also been several studies completed on biographies of figures in past fascist groups or far-right networks, nonetheless Ian Kershaw’s expansive study of Hitler.<sup>128</sup> Thus, in the broad field of history and the smaller section of fascist studies, biography is a well-used tool by this point. It is not, however, without its potential issues, which will be briefly outlined.

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<sup>126</sup> Stephen E. Koss, ‘British Political Biography as History’, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.88 No.4 (1973) p.716.

<sup>127</sup> Lois W. Banner, ‘Biography as History’, *The American Historical Review*, Vol.114 No.2 (2009) pp.579-586; Jose Miguel Sardica, ‘The Content and Form of ‘Conventional’ Historical Biography’, *The Journal of Theory and Practice*, Vol.17 No.3 (2013) pp.383-400; Lloyd E. Ambrosius, ‘Introduction’, in E. Ambrosius, Lloyd (eds) *Writing Biography: Historians and their Craft* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004) pp.i-xiii; Hans Renders & Binne de Haan ‘Introduction: The Challenges of Biography Studies’ in Renders, Hans and de Haan, Binne (eds) *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing* (Amsterdam: Brill, 2014) pp.1-10 (p.3).

<sup>128</sup> Francis Becket, *Fascist in the Family: The Tragedy of John Beckett M.P.* (London: Routledge, 2017); Ian Kershaw, *Hitler* (London: Penguin, 2009); David Howell, *Mosley and British Politics 1918-1932: Oswald’s Odyssey* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Luke LeCras, *A.K. Chesterton and the Evolution of Britain’s Extreme Right, 1933-1973* (London: Routledge, 2020); Colin Holmes, *Searching for Lord Haw-Haw: The Political Lives of William Joyce* (London: Routledge, 2016).

The first is that the ‘objective’ view of history that historians so often reach for is not obtainable. Jose Miguel Sardica stresses the point that ‘there is no such thing as an aseptic, absolute objective and scientific history’.<sup>129</sup> However, the author of biographical study must be watchful to not swing the other way and yield their scholarly inquiry to their subjective view of the subject. This was stressed by Alun Munslow in his advocacy of biography-as-method, suggesting that all types of history, including biography, are substitute narratives for what once was; ‘they share an epistemological nature’.<sup>130</sup> One way in which previous authors of biography have avoided tilting too far in either direction is to avoid involving themselves with overt moral judgements of historical actors. One such example is Kershaw’s *Hitler*, which while not being purposefully evasive of the question of morality does not devote time to it, rather attempts as much as any individual can when writing to remain objective and reconstruct the figure’s life and their surroundings. For this study, this provides a platform to balance on. It is not to say Lymington was somehow exempt from moral arbitrations. Quite the opposite. It is to say, however, that the focus here is on the larger task of placing Lymington in his life as accurately as possible using the connected source material and working towards the answer of this works research questions. Historians should not be morally aloof, but their task is primarily to recreate the past in its full color.

To do this, this study will adopt the following structure. Following this section, there will be a segment on the Britain Lymington inhabited. It will act as a contextual section, outlining changes to elements of Britain that most affected Lymington. As it will show, a longstanding reduction in the power and political standing of the British aristocracy, changes to the Conservative party’s priorities, economic decline as well as imperial decline, all weighed heavy on Lymington’s mind, and provide the scene he entered upon election. This topic will form the first chapter, presenting Lymington’s time in the House of Commons. His records in Hansard show a frustrating litany of declined requests to fix British agriculture and correct problems Lymington identified with the standing of the British empire. It will also offer outlines of his activities relevant to his participation in Conservative politics and his political views. Chapter two begins the investigation of Lymington’s organizational activities in the English Mystery and English Array. This was a formational experience for him. He meets figures such as Sanderson and Ludovici, as well as others, and it also shows the beginnings of an ideology gravitating towards the fascist realm. It ends in the late 1930s, as when war seemed inevitable Lymington’s ceased the activities of the Array. Chapter three looks at Lymington’s role in the appeasement movement of the later 1930s and his

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<sup>129</sup> Jose Miguel Sardica, ‘The Content and Form of ‘Conventional’ Historical Biography’, *The Journal of Theory and Practice*, Vol.17 No.3 (2013) pp.383-400 (pp.395-398).

<sup>130</sup> Alun Munslow, ‘History and Biography: An Editorial Comment’, *The Journal of Theory and Practice*, Vol.7 No.1 (2003) pp.1-11 (p.3).

focuses on his organization of the British Council of European Commitments, a group with deep links with the Array and other fascist groups. Here we find Lymington squaring the circle of his extreme British patriotism and pro-Nazism. Then, the study takes us to the Kinship in Husbandry, a group Lymington formed with Rolf Gardiner and highlights the combined nature of Lymington's organicism and eugenic outlook. It also yields interesting findings about how he was perceived by his contemporaries and details some of his war time activities. The final chapter then establishes Lymington as a national figure and ideologue in certain circles. Using primarily his 1938 book *Famine in England* and the substantial positive and national response to it, this chapter aims to demonstrate Lymington's position as both an attractive figure in the mainstream press and a mouthpiece for British fascism. Then, at the end of this study, are some concluding thoughts about and where Lymington should be approached in British history.

#### Political Crises of Party, Property and Empire

For Lymington's politics, the history and political changes to his class and cultural instincts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were fundamental. To both explicate his imaginative inventory and socialization and paint the scene he entered upon his election in 1929, this section will examine the most relevant changes to the position Lymington inherited and the most influential contextual developments pertinent to the politics he developed.

Born into a landowning aristocratic family, whose homestead Farleigh Wallop had been, since the Norman Conquest, been orientated toward farming and agriculture, Lymington was influenced by a specific set of changes. The ground on which the British aristocracy had been set had been consistently shaken from the nineteenth to the twentieth century.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, land productivity and property were central to class and later, Lymington's concerns. Gradual but steady economic depression had seen British agricultures' share of gross national product drop from twenty per cent in the 1870s to seven per cent in 1914.<sup>132</sup> Simultaneous to the collapse of agricultural prices in the 1870s was the ending of the 'great epoch of country-house building', as 'land was no longer much of a source of wealth, the country house was valued more as a symbol of ancestry than economic power.'<sup>133</sup> This change in cultural and economic status was concomitant with a resurgence in rural romanticism. There had been a longstanding rural-romantic reaction to the urbanization and industrialization of Britain which idealized the

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<sup>131</sup> For a broad history of this, see; David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London: Penguin, 1990).

<sup>132</sup> E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) p.25.

<sup>133</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Remaking of Edwardian Society* (London: Routledge, 1977), p.15.

countryside and presented its vision in medieval terms, and these changes to the landowning and big-farming classes fed into this outlook adding a particularly strong aristocratic element.<sup>134</sup> Contemporaneous writers such as Henry Newbolt discussed a mythical past for the rational of what society should be, and Ford Maddox Ford recognized the formation of a neo-romantic ‘back-to-the-land’ movement in the early 1900s.<sup>135</sup> Ford understood this movement as largely confined to the wealthier, landed elements of British society. However, figures on the left echoed similar sentiments, with writers such as William Morris professing a commitment to both socialism and ‘back-to-the-land’ movements.<sup>136</sup> In his description of the political *dramatis personae* of the period, Martin J. Weiner writes ‘English character was not inherently progressive, but conservative.’<sup>137</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, Weiner describes the peculiar position of England. That, England was an immensely powerful country, indeed the heart of the leading capitalist empire, with a wealthy landed elite presiding over a ‘waning rural economy’.<sup>138</sup>

There were additional changes to the position and surrounding context of the British aristocracy, and these were deeply connected to the Conservative party, which had been for a long time its political expression.<sup>139</sup> Lymington was born into a family which had roots in both the British aristocracy as well as the Conservative Party, and as most of his childhood education was spent in the British education system, on British aristocratic property, dealing with a slowly depreciating British agricultural sector and growing revolt against the British Empire, Lymington’s primary concerns and ideological inspirations were tailored to the British context. While British ideological trends are of course connected to events in both Europe and across the Atlantic, it is clear from Lymington’s early activities his priority was dealing with the British context.

In parallel with the expansion of urban areas and the industrial penetration of the countryside, the Conservative party had been changing their relationship with, and conception of, private property. As E. H. H. Green discusses, the Conservative party found in these newly constructed urban areas and the attendant wealth they carried new political support, resulting in a ‘greatly-expanded urban Tory elite.’<sup>140</sup> This caused what has been labelled ‘the

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<sup>134</sup> Tom Hulme, ‘Historical Pageants, Neo-Romanticism and the City in Inter-War Britain’, in *Restaging the Past*, Angela Bartie, Linda Fleming, Mark Freeman, Mark Freeman, Alexander Hutton, Paul Readman (eds) (London: University College London Press, 2020) p.159.

<sup>135</sup> Henry Newbolt, *The Old Body: A Romance* (London: Smith and Elder & Co, 1906); Ford Maddox Ford, *The Heart of the Country: A Survey of Modern Land* (London, 1906).

<sup>136</sup> E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (PM Press, 1976)

<sup>137</sup> Martin J. Weiner, *English Culture and Decline of Industrial Spirit 1850-1980* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981) p.6.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>139</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Remaking of Edwardian Society*, pp.15-23.

<sup>140</sup> E. H. H. Green, *Crisis of Conservatism*, p.71.

transformation of Victorian Conservatism' and saw 'the Conservative party become less the party of the land and more the party of property in general.'<sup>141</sup>

The feeling of anxiety and decline this caused in the British aristocracy was exacerbated by problems in empire. Growing nationalist cries for Home Rule in Ireland had threatened the class interests of large Irish landowners, leading to the requisition of property in some cases. The English equivalents saw this as not only a revolt against the British empire but also interpreted it in class-war terms, fearing such a threat would travel to England. Often, how the Home Rule crisis was perceived was connected to the identities of the party approaching it, and so the Conservative party, the party of property and empire, perceived it in the language of class and as potential further threat to aristocratic standing, which while present before World War One became increasingly so in the following period.<sup>142</sup> Indeed, It is generally accepted that the seeds of fascism and its localized instantiations had roots in the period preceding World War One, and it was that great conflict which allowed for the seeds of fascism to germinate.<sup>143</sup>

Aristocratic anxiousness was further compounded by the Conservative party's poor showing in the Boer War and the threat of differing Liberal conceptions of empire. As Green describes; 'The Conservative party's problems as the party of empire reached a crisis point with the Boer War. The military weaknesses, administrative incompetence, and indeed social problems the war revealed laid the Conservatives open to the charge that, as the party of empire, they had not done a particularly good job.'<sup>144</sup> Within a few years, there was what Paul Thompson has identified as a revolt of the Edwardian aristocracy, where the relationship between the English elite and state politics hit a new low, with the 'astonishing decision of the House of Lords to veto the 1909 budget in protest at the unspectacular taxation of landowners which it anticipated', an unconstitutional act with no precedent.<sup>145</sup> Along with the landowning class being hit hard by the agricultural depression, the aristocracy truly felt their order in decline, that a burgeoning class war that would be to their detriment was incoming. This was illustrated by Winston Churchill's comments in 1909, stating there was nothing before the aristocracy and landed classes of England but 'savage strife between class and class.'<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Green, *Crisis in Conservatism*, p.53-5; p.79.

<sup>143</sup> Philip Morgan, *Fascism in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2003) pp.15-28; Robert Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London: The Penguin Group, 2004) pp.234-236.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.69.

<sup>145</sup> Thompson, *Remaking of Edwardian Society*, p.174.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p.174.

Another pre-war expression of this rural landowning and aristocratic anxiety manifested in Lord Winchilsea's National Agricultural Union (NAU), which indisputably shared ideals with Lymington's later groups the English Mistery and English Array, all of whom were responding to these specifically British issues. Winchilsea's ruralism, nationalism and aristocratic inclination all presented similarly to the later English Mistery and English Array. The NAU was a vehicle for dissatisfied aristocratic and conservative minds to express their antipathy toward the declining state of British agriculture and thus Britain itself. Paul Readman has offered a study of Lord Winchilsea's activities and described the NAU as 'patriotic' and operating 'in the defense of the national industry of agriculture.'<sup>147</sup> Elsewhere, N. C. Fleming understood Winchilsea himself as having held ideals of a 'traditional rural society' and purist notions of 'rural Englishness'.<sup>148</sup> In these ways, Winchilsea's group can be understood as prototypical of Lymington's, responding to similar issues they perceived as threatening Britain, at different times.

Of course, Winchilsea's group was not born in the age of fascism, or its 'epoch'. It was also present before the First World War, which shook many of the presuppositions of pre-war western society. Indeed, as Richard Overy describes, the 'impact of both the First World War and the accelerated pace of modern civilization provoked a widespread sense in Europe that the ideals of 'western civilization', which had been taken for granted in the years before 1914, faced a critical, perhaps even fatal, turning point.'<sup>149</sup> In Britain, this was in large part due to a shaken faith in capitalism and empire, which had been so before the war, but the war was a catalyst which allowed these pre-existing anxieties to reach new heights. In the years immediately following the war, 'the notion that capitalism was in a state of physical, possibly fatal decay became embedded in popular perception of the economic system'.<sup>150</sup> The capitalist order, in the eyes of many, 'was no longer capable of functioning as it had done before'.<sup>151</sup> This was in part due to changes in the imperial economic relations which, in turn, rebounded back to Britain and form a direct backdrop to Lymington's concerns over agriculture and the British empire.

The British empire had seen revolts from and subsequent varying concessions to several imperial subjects, including Ireland and Egypt. The inevitable difficulties in managing an empire manifested in particular ways in the 1920s and 1930s, especially following the global agricultural crises of 1926. What is a key factor to understanding Lymington's politics, as well as those he travelled with through the Conservative party, far-right

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<sup>147</sup> Paul Readman, 'Conservatives and the Politics of Land: Lord Winchilsea's National Agricultural Union, 1893-1901' *English Historical Review* Vol.CXXI No.490 (2006) pp.35-69 (pp.53-57).

<sup>148</sup> N. C. Fleming, *Britannia's Zealots, Volume I: Tradition, Empire and the Forging of the Conservative Right* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019) pp.138-140.

<sup>149</sup> Richard Overy, *The Inter-War Crisis 1919-1939* (London: Routledge, 2007) p.38.

<sup>150</sup> Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars* (London: Penguin, 2009) p.53.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.



and fascist landscapes, is what Utsa and Prabhat Patnaik termed ‘The Unraveling of the Colonial Agreement’, a fundamental aspect of how the British empire entered the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>152</sup> They describe what the colonial arrangement entailed and are worth quoting at length.

‘Britain kept its own market open to the industrialisers, while finding a market for its own goods in the colonial economies (and also China) at the expense of the local craftsmen there. It substantially ‘drained away’ the economic surplus of these economies, using funds for settling its own account deficits with, and also making capital exports to, the new industrialisers. The commodity forms these capital exports took was of the products that constituted the colonies exports. So, the colonies played three roles; first providing a market for the leading capitalist economy’s goods and indirectly for the goods of the metropolitan capitalist world; second, providing surplus for the capital exports and for a diffusion of capitalism; and, third, providing an appropriate commodity-form that could make all this possible.’

Due to longstanding economic downward trends and the additional economic precarity following World War One, this network or ‘arrangement’ unraveled post-1918. Britain’s debt had jumped from £706 million in 1914 to £7,875 million in 1920.<sup>153</sup> This was in part a product of what has been labelled the ‘Oil-Wars’ of the inter-war period. As Fiona Venn has illustrated, while the Anglo-American relationship has often been given a rosy coloring, underneath the surface there was deep suspicion and competition. Indeed, Venn instructs us that Anglo-American competition over oil in the Middle East ‘played a major role in the complex and volatile relationship between the two governments in the interwar period.’<sup>154</sup> The product of this conflict over oil was the placation of American companies and the expansion of American international business into the Middle-East, which in turn weighed in on Britain’s previous monopoly on Middle-Eastern oil. British policy here, it has been argued by some, was motivated by the huge amount of debt Britain owed to the U. S. As one historian has suggested, by the 1920s the U. S. was the ‘world’s largest debtor’.<sup>155</sup> Indeed, by the Versailles Conference of 1919, Britain was indebted to

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<sup>152</sup> Utsa Patnaik and Prabhat Patnaik, *Capital and Imperialism: Theory, History and the Present* (New York: Monthly Review Press: New York) p.173.

<sup>153</sup> Kenneth O. Morgan, *Twentieth Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p.16.

<sup>154</sup> See; Fiona Venn, ‘A Futile paper chase: Anglo-American relations and middle east oil, 1918-34’ *Diplomacy & Statecraft* Vol.1 No.2 (2007) pp.165-184; Fiona Venn, ‘The Wartime ‘special relationship’? From oil war to Anglo-American Oil Agreement, 1939-1945’ *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* Vol.10 No.2 (2012) pp.119-133

<sup>155</sup> William Engdahl, *A Century of War: Anglo-American Oil Politics and The New World Order* (London: Pluto Pres, 1992) p.xi

the U. S. to the some of \$4.7 billion, primarily in war debts.<sup>156</sup> Thus, Britain made concessions to the Americans during competition over oil in the Middle-East, but also in South America, such as in the case of Mexico.<sup>157</sup>

To attempt to cope with this, Britain increased their surplus extraction from colonial provinces, such as India. This exemplified the ‘inherent limits of colonial markets’ but also reduced the space in the colonies for the sale of British goods, shrinking the British market. As Utsa and Prabhait described, there was an inherent contradiction in this colonial arrangement that came to the fore post-1918. Namely, ‘the greater the surplus extracted from the colony, the smaller is its role as a market for metropolitan goods.’<sup>158</sup> The commodity form with the most utility in the colonial markets had been textiles, foodstuffs and the productions of various craftsmen. Goods that were, by and large, produced in the rural areas of Britain. The demand for the produce of Britain’s rural workers and farmers, the people in Lymington’s immediate surroundings, reduced significantly, adding to the already depressive agricultural sector. This became an important part of Lymington’s vision of agricultural revival, which he pursued through both the English Mystery and English Array. The consolidation and stabilizing of English crafts, and the re-employment of craftsmen, became very important to him, once again illustrating that it was changes in Lymington’s immediate surroundings which proved most important to his political shifts. Indeed, as we shall see in the chapter dealing with Lymington’s time in parliament, he would consistently bring to bear his concerns over the English agricultural sector and the lives of his fellow farmers and craftsmen, the ‘mobilizing passions’ here being changes to his immediate surroundings in the rural areas of Southern England. Imperial relations were also in flux and when combined this produced a particular stratum of British society looking for a new radical formulation of politics.

All the above also colored the Conservative party Lymington entered, and the party itself presented a deep strain of dissatisfaction with previous leadership. The Lloyd-George coalition of the early 1920s had seen the Anglo-Irish treaty signed, which was perceived by Conservatives as a ‘betrayal’ of the union and of the British Empire. The coalition had ‘gravely offended the unionist and imperial sensibilities of many conservatives.’<sup>159</sup> Elsewhere, members of the party who were part of the ‘overwhelmingly conservative’ farming community, like Lymington, felt let down by the governments repeal in July 1921 of the Wartime Agricultural Acts, which had guaranteed prices of wheat and oats.<sup>160</sup> Indeed, Lloyd George, despite shedding his pre-war radicalism, had obtained a name

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p.50

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., pp.61-65

<sup>158</sup> Utsa Patanik and Prabhait Patnaik, *Capital and Imperialism* p.174.

<sup>159</sup> E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, p.116.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

for himself among Conservatives as a socialist threat to both empire and land. Thus, among the 'diehard' conservatives which emerged following the war, diluting their conservatism through pacts, bipartisanship or coalitions was out of the question. The coalition of the early 1920s had, for many on the right, represented complete failures on the 'anti-Socialist front', further surrender to Labour seemed out of the question.<sup>161</sup> Thus what emerged in the 1920s was a portion of conservatives that believed the solution to problems of economy, empire and the 'anti-Socialist front' was a concentrated conservatism or 'Toryism'. Stanley Baldwin, who became party leader in 1923, called an election in the same year and lost the party majority to Ramsey Macdonald's Labour. Baldwin, whom many on the conservative right believed to be 'positively dangerous' for his concessions to class interests and therefore the left, represented just one motivation for several of these 'diehards' to orbit closer toward radical right and fascist movements that sprung up after Mussolini's success in Italy.<sup>162</sup> As David Baker suggested, British fascism's first impetus can be found in an 'ultra-conservative response to the social consequences of the First World War and rise of Bolshevism.'<sup>163</sup> Thus Conservative party Lymington entered in 1929 was one fraught with internal discontent and growing fears of existential levels over the rise of Labour and socialism, imperial decline and further skepticism of the expanded franchise brought in 1928. To attempt to rectify issues over agriculture, empire and trade many conservatives turned to overt protectionism and increased tariffs, and Lymington also did. There was an interesting parallel with Germany here. Withstanding a different national context, German conservative *Junkers* or 'young lords' as Preparata understood them, also decried a perceived agricultural and economic decline, and successfully called for protectionist tariffs.<sup>164</sup>

It can be noted here that, despite Lymington's resignation coming in 1934, 'all conservatives, arguably since 1906 and certainly since 1918, were agreed that socialism was *the* enemy which had to be confronted and defeated.'<sup>165</sup> This was one line of thinking that Lymington retained as foundational before, during and after his time in the Conservative party. Lymington's activities in the buildup to 1929 put him in good stead for a political career. Having worked on it for several years prior, in 1927 he obtained ownership of his family estate in Hampshire and was presented with 200 signatures from locals who praised his accession. They announced that the 'Portsmouth estate is owned by a just and liberal landlord and held by a free, independent and industrious tenantry.'<sup>166</sup> From

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid., pp.116-121.

<sup>162</sup> G. C. Webber, *Ideology of the British Right*, pp.27-28.

<sup>163</sup> David Baker, 'The Extreme Right in the 1920s' in Mike Cronin (ed), *The Failure of British Fascism: The Far Right and the Fight for Political Recognition* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990) pp.12-28 (p.17).

<sup>164</sup> Guido Preparata, *Conjuring Hitler*, pp.1-15.

<sup>165</sup> E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism*, p.126.

<sup>166</sup> *New Ross Standard*, 28 January 1927, p.4.

1927 Lyminster engineered a growing reputation as a speaker and agriculturalist. In March 1927 he gave a talk on life in the American West and was described as having ‘kept his audience interested to the last moment.’<sup>167</sup> Lyminster’s place of birth and the struggling agricultural sector in the U. S. would seem adequate explanations for this topic. However, Lyminster’s agricultural engagements were focused far more on the problems facing Britain. Certainly, his agricultural activities in the late 1920s are almost exclusively oriented around English farming. As we shall soon see, these concerns were brought by Lyminster into the Commons and his speeches there were almost exclusively inspired by problems he perceived in England and facing the British Empire. It is, nonetheless, the case that Lyminster shows some alignment with broader ideological trends present in his birthplace at the turn of the century. Particularly, notions of racial and civilizational decline, which run increasingly strong through Lyminster’s work in the 1930s, coming to the fore in his book *Famine in England*, where they are most pronounced. The fifth Chapter of this study, which deals with said book, will look to this connection. It remained the case, though, that Lyminster’s activities and proposed solutions were tailored almost exclusively to the British context. They took increasingly radical and violent forms as he travelled through the 1930s, and he did not completely neglect events involving the U. S., but they were clearly of secondary importance to him, and his political and intellectual corpus rarely invokes a feeling of loyalty to his country of birth. In the fifth Chapter of this study, we look to *Famine in England* as, in part, representing a broader, transatlantic, ideological trend of what Stephen D. Arata called ‘reverse colonization’, a fear that the colonial expansion visited upon the Global South by Europe would be returned to it.<sup>168</sup> Lyminster’s statements in *Famine in England* are exemplary of this. He stated, in the context of growing continental tensions in 1938, the following:

‘Neither the Yellow Races nor Islam would be sorry to see a European war which brought them nearer to recovering mastery of the world. A weakened England would be for them of all things most desirable. The Empire...would fall like ripe plums into their hands.’<sup>169</sup>

This is indicative of Lyminster’s priorities and primary inspirations. It is true, Lyminster saw threats to the ‘West’ as monolithic. As we shall see, he often lumped his anti-Semitism in with anti-Communism and was not apart from transatlantic feelings of decline as result of these ‘threats’. How he responded, however, was to focus

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<sup>167</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser*, 5 March 1927, p.4.

<sup>168</sup> Stephen D. Arata, ‘The Occidental Tourist: ‘Dracula’ and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization’, *Victorian Studies* Vol.33 No.4 (1990) pp.621-645

<sup>169</sup> Lyminster, *Famine in England*, p.19

particularly on issues facing England and the British Empire, inspired by his experiences of English agriculture and political landscape in the late-1920s.

Lymington directed agricultural auctions and fetes across England, and in May 1927 was elected chairman of the Guild of Hampshire Craftsmen.<sup>170</sup> He acquainted himself with other aristocrats by attending balls and hunts, and held lectures on agricultural matters.<sup>171</sup> In early 1928 Lymington lectured on Frederick the Great in front of a 'large attendance', with all proceeds being sent to the North Devon infirmary.<sup>172</sup> Lymington was elected as a Conservative county councilor in 1928, and was tipped by the existing consistency representative, the Conservative Arthur Holdbrook, as the next elected M. P.<sup>173</sup> In late 1928, Lymington attended another Hampshire conservative fete as chief speaker, and was formally introduced as the next running conservative representative for Basingstoke.<sup>174</sup> As we can see, Lymington rapidly increased his standing in a time of Conservative unease and imperial grievance, and by the end of the 1920s, the economic depression facing Britain. Now the scene has been set, we shall turn to Lymington's activities time as an M. P.

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<sup>170</sup> *Burton Observer and Chronicle*, 19 May 1927, p.2; *Guild of Hampshire Craftsmen*, 21 May 1927, p.6.

<sup>171</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 15 January 1927; *Gloucester Citizen*, 17 January 1927; *Hampshire Advertiser*, 5 March 1927.

<sup>172</sup> *North Devon Journal*, 26 January 1928, p.3.

<sup>173</sup> *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 28 April 1928, p.15.

<sup>174</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser*, 15 September 1928, p.8.

### **Viscount Lymington M.P.**

Viscount Lymington began his parliamentary career in 1929, after being elected in his constituency of Basingstoke, and resigned in 1934 after becoming completely disillusioned with the capacity of British democracy to meet the challenges he perceived it faced. Parliament was a pivotal experience for Lymington. His time in parliament indicates several of his early onset dissatisfactions and fears which grew into his reactionary and extreme ideology which will be subject to greater study later. It also indicates where on the parliamentary-political spectrum he sat which was undoubtedly on the Conservative right. That is not to say he was distanced from the mainstream traffic of ideas of the Conservative Party; on the contrary, his ideology shared much with a great deal of party members. Furthermore, Lymington made several high-profile contacts during his time in the House of Commons, some of which he brought with him into his extra-parliamentary activities. One of these that he later invited to the English Mistery and remain in contact with for several years was Michael Beaumont, who often spoke together at Conservative fetes, and another was Reginald Dorman Smith, who he also collaborated with through and beyond party politics.<sup>175</sup> Lymington garnered a name for himself as early as 1930 as an upcoming politician with a lot to offer, being described as having ‘a high reputation in the House of Commons and in the country as an authority on agriculture’.<sup>176</sup>

Lymington’s parliamentary career can only be described as a time of frustration and contention. As we shall see, he partook in a continuous strain of Conservative backbench rebellion against the party leadership, usually pioneered by the ‘diehard’ milieu he operated within. This was largely to do with the formation of a National Government, the project of Baldwin to make the Conservative party more ‘liberal’, a minority Labour government, and the consequences this had for Britain’s relationship with its imperial properties, such as India. As we shall soon see, this was perhaps the breaking point for Lymington, who could not bear the thought of Britain acquiescing to Indian nationalist calls for home rule. There was also the issue of agriculture, a mainstay for Lymington that stayed with him throughout his whole life. The records of Hansard alone indicate his increasing frustration with the government for their failure to recognize his and others concerns over the state of British agriculture, which he envisioned as dying and decrepit. The record of House of Commons debates clearly illustrates his frequent clashes with the Minister of Agriculture and Lymington’s increasing frustration with what he saw as completely

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<sup>175</sup> *Bucks Herald*, 21 November 1930, p.6.

<sup>176</sup> *Bucks Herald*, 21 November 1930, p.6.

dissatisfactory response. In connection to his concerns over agriculture, Lymington also confessed fears over unemployment, to which he offered solutions embedded in the potential of the agricultural market.

If we examine Lymington's presence in the House of Commons and the recordings of his participation, we find a consistent record of frustration over agricultural affairs. One of the first recordings available of Lymington's parliamentary participation is regarding imported foodstuff, specifically tomatoes. On 22 July 1929, Lymington requested a review into the number of imported tomatoes, the response being a firm denial to so.<sup>177</sup> The topic of imported and exported produce troubled Lymington throughout his time in parliament and beyond, becoming a frequently visited topic of the English Mystery and English Array. Indeed, powerful sections of the Conservative party had been since the 1920s seeking tariffs on imported goods to protect the virility of domestic production.<sup>178</sup> Lymington was a staunch advocate of tariffs on imported foodstuffs and in the early 1930s was one of the most vocal voices in parliament on the matter. He was not alone in this, and many others on both sides of the parliamentary floor advocated for similar policies.

Lymington made his ideas over the importance of British self-sufficiency and subsequently the necessity of home-grown produce well known in the commons. In February 1930, Lymington asked the Minister of Agriculture whether the grading capacity of British beef would be expanded to encourage greater production of quality British beef. Again, the Minister of Agriculture refused Lymington's propositions, instead favoring the existing system.<sup>179</sup> Later this same year, Lymington offered some specific solutions. In October, Lymington spoke further of the need for self-sufficiency, which required the opening of the home market and that the subsequent profits be invested. In fact, Lymington cited a 'striking' speech by Oswald Mosley in which it was asserted that 'the home consumer is a great unexploited market'.<sup>180</sup> Taking up this point, Lymington suggested a combined approach that could combat 'crumbling' British agriculture and 'the really vital question' of tackling unemployment.<sup>181</sup> Lymington then detailed how by investing in three particular avenues of agriculture, dairying, poultry and pork, to the point of reaching self-sufficiency and minimizing the need for importation, up to 500,000 jobs would be created.

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<sup>177</sup> HC Deb (22 July 1929). Vol. 230. Col. 900. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1929/jul/22/imported-tomatoes-marking#S5CV0230P0\\_19290722\\_HOC\\_174](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1929/jul/22/imported-tomatoes-marking#S5CV0230P0_19290722_HOC_174) (Accessed: 1 October 2021).

<sup>178</sup> Stuart Ball, 'The Conservative Party, the Role of the State and the Politics of Protection, c.1918-1932', *History* Vol.96 No.3 (2011) pp.280-303.

<sup>179</sup> HC Deb (3 February 1930). Vol. 234. Col. 1492-4. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/feb/03/british-meat-national-mark#S5CV0234P0\\_19300203\\_HOC\\_230](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/feb/03/british-meat-national-mark#S5CV0234P0_19300203_HOC_230) (Accessed: 1 December 2021).

<sup>180</sup> HC Deb (30 October 1930). Vol. 244. Col. 221-339. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/oct/30/debate-on-the-address#S5CV0244P0\\_19301030\\_HOC\\_403](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/oct/30/debate-on-the-address#S5CV0244P0_19301030_HOC_403) (Accessed: 3 October 2021).

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

Lymington spoke of £22,000,000 worth of eggs being imported and how Britain could produce this by itself, thus through investment creating jobs and working toward self-sufficiency.<sup>182</sup> This would also combat the perceived economic crises, and Lymington concluded by asking the commons ‘is it not worth, even if it is only a wild dream, to be entirely self-supporting, aiming at and fighting for?’<sup>183</sup> Lymington’s proposed cures for Britain ailments extended beyond meat farming. Speaking of British beer, he suggested early in his time in office it was imperative for British beer to be reinstated as a necessary contingent of homegrown produce. Lymington lamented what he saw as the loss of homegrown beer, stating the British public had been educated away from it.<sup>184</sup> Thus, the British public should have been encouraged to develop a taste for homegrown beer once again. On this occasion, however, Lymington’s reasoning went beyond his commitment to self-sufficiency through autarkic production and cited the importance of beer to agricultural workers. Lymington said in the commons that there was ‘no greater richness, no greater geniality, no great kindness or companionship to be found than in the village ‘pub’’. Indeed, Lymington urged a reintroduction of British beer in aid of the hardest-hit workers in the agricultural sector.<sup>185</sup>

Lymington, elsewhere, requested increased focus upon and funding for young farmers clubs, to increase the education of young agriculturalists and increase the overall membership of farmers clubs.<sup>186</sup> Once again frustrating Lymington, the response from the Minister of Agriculture was one willing to support the idea in every way but financial.<sup>187</sup> As this indicates, Lymington’s concerns over agriculture extended beyond domestic production and rejuvenating employment and consequential autarky.

The issue of British tithe on rural Britain also bothered Lymington enough for him to make public his issues with it. Early in his parliamentary days Lymington mentioned various complaints from farmers over the inconsistency in tithe charges.<sup>188</sup> Tithe proved a consistent problem for Lymington. The following year Lymington beseeched

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<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>184</sup> HC Deb (30 April 1930). Vol. 238. Col. 209-79. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/apr/30/death-duties-on-objects-of-art-c#S5CV0238P0\\_19300430\\_HOC\\_264](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/apr/30/death-duties-on-objects-of-art-c#S5CV0238P0_19300430_HOC_264) (Accessed: 4 November 2021).

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> HC Deb (9 December 1929). Vol. 233. Col. 54-5. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1929/dec/09/young-farmers-clubs#S5CV0233P0\\_19291209\\_CWA\\_54](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1929/dec/09/young-farmers-clubs#S5CV0233P0_19291209_CWA_54) (Accessed: 1 December 2021).

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> HC Deb (11 December 1929). Vol. 233. Col.461-2. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1929/dec/11/tithe-rentcharge#S5CV0233P0\\_19291211\\_HOC\\_240](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1929/dec/11/tithe-rentcharge#S5CV0233P0_19291211_HOC_240) (Accessed: 1 December 2021).



the Minister of Agriculture to investigate the ‘unequal burden’ of tithe on agricultural land.<sup>189</sup> The response was again unhelpful to Lymington, refusing to agree to the proposal. May 1930 saw Lymington declare his frustration with the Minister and the broader response to his calls, describing his efforts to obtain the focus of the Minister for Agriculture as falling on ‘barren, stony and absolutely unfertile ground.’<sup>190</sup> It was only one day before this that Lymington enquired about the government’s awareness of the ‘increasing depression’ in British agriculture and if the Minister would approach it before the next seasons harvest.<sup>191</sup> The Minister in question refused to comment, and Lymington’s frustration came to the fore again. The ‘dissatisfactory nature’ of the response was noted, and the Minister of Agriculture was warned it would be raised in private at the earliest possible opportunity.<sup>192</sup> These fruitless interactions between Lymington and the Minister of Agriculture would only have compounded Lymington’s distaste for the Labour administration in government.

Late in the same year, 1930, there was a rebellion among Conservatives against the leadership of Stanley Baldwin. On 28 October 1930 44 Conservative M. P.s, of which Lymington was one, met and decided to send a signed declaration to the party’s chief whip, stating ‘We, the subjoined members of the House of Commons, submit that a change of leadership is essential to the national interest.’<sup>193</sup> The intent of the rebellion, which was led by a Colonel Gretton, was to oppose any future votes of confidence in Baldwin’s leadership. The vast majority of the M. P.s were from southern constituencies. The rebellion hit national news and was a feature in several press outlets.<sup>194</sup> The rebellion culminated in a mass-meeting of Conservative officials, numbering over 600, at Caxton Hall. The new topic debated was the proposed change in leadership, and the meeting was touted as ‘one of the most important meetings in the recent history of the Conservative Party’.<sup>195</sup> At the meeting, a motion was proposed to change the leadership of the party. In less than 24 hours, the rebellion had attracted an extra 72 supporters within the party, but 116 votes in favor was not enough to overturn a majority of 462. In an effort to curtail this

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<sup>189</sup> HC Deb (5 May 1930). Vol. 238. Col. 654W. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1930/may/05/tithe#S5CV0238P0\\_19300505\\_CWA\\_85](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1930/may/05/tithe#S5CV0238P0_19300505_CWA_85) (Accessed: 4 November 2021).

<sup>190</sup> HC Deb (27 May 1930). Vol. 239. Col.1011-109. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/may/27/clause-1-increased-excise-duty-on-beer#S5CV0239P0\\_19300527\\_HOC\\_398](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/may/27/clause-1-increased-excise-duty-on-beer#S5CV0239P0_19300527_HOC_398) (Accessed: 9 November 2021).

<sup>191</sup> HC Deb (26 May 1930). Vol. 239. Col. 807-8. Available: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/may/26/government-proposals#S5CV0239P0\\_19300526\\_HOC\\_218](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/may/26/government-proposals#S5CV0239P0_19300526_HOC_218) (Accessed: 7 November 2021).

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> *Dundee Courier*, 29 October 1930, p.7.

<sup>194</sup> *Gloucester Citizen*, 29 October 1930; *The Scotsman*, 29 October 1930; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 29 October 1930; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 29 October 1930; *Daily News London*, 29 October 1930.

<sup>195</sup> *Portsmouth Evening News*, 30 October 1930, p.9.

rebellious faction, however, Baldwin 'pledged himself to introduce a policy of tariffs on foreign manufactured goods.'<sup>196</sup> As a result, it was reported that Baldwin was 'loudly cheered' upon his next entrance to the House of Commons.<sup>197</sup> Nonetheless, Lymington had clearly indicated he had little faith in the leadership of the party and that he was, at this point in his career, willing to try and overturn it from within parliament. His lack of faith in the party was not placated by Baldwin's pledge and he continued his criticisms of government and conservative policy.

Lymington did not confine his quest for agricultural rejuvenation to parliamentary speeches. Outside of the commons, he was a prolific speaker and active political figure. In late 1930 he met with Michael Beaumont, also a member of the English Mistery, in Aylesbury to speak at a conservative mass meeting, at which he lambasted the Labour party's plans for rural England. Lymington suggested instead the government turn to safeguarding and the quota system.<sup>198</sup>

The same year Lymington travelled to Italy and spent time at the International Institute of Agriculture, meeting officials of the fascist regime.<sup>199</sup> In 1931, Lymington published a series of articles condemning the lack of state response to the problem of vermin on farms, and also spoke at Retford and informed his listeners they could expect very little from politicians on matters of agriculture and that taxes on foreign imports should be promoted.<sup>200</sup>

By 1933 Lymington had certainly cemented his position as a popular and capable agricultural politician, being referred to in the press as having 'views of almost startling originality' in farming matters and was expected to have a 'remarkable future in politics.'<sup>201</sup> 1933 saw Lymington provide more lectures on a variety of topics, from the 'future of agriculture' to the 'tithe question' and further promotions and debates within the National Farmers Union, being invited as lead speaker to several National Farmers Union events.<sup>202</sup> Elsewhere, in a meeting for Hampshire farmers in which Lymington spoke on the current state of politics, Lymington stated he would 'tell the League of Nations, the Socialists and the Liberals to go to hell'.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> *Lancashire Evening Post*, 30 October 1930, p.5.

<sup>198</sup> *Bucks Herald*, 21 November 1930, p.6.

<sup>199</sup> *Hampshire Advertiser*, 1 November 1930, p.9; Lymington, *A Knot of Roots*, pp.28-32.

<sup>200</sup> *Western Times*, 11 September 1931, p.7; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 14 September 1931, p.7.

<sup>201</sup> *Nottingham Evening Post*, 30 January 1933, p.4.

<sup>202</sup> *Western Morning News*, 11 March 1933, p.1; *Western Gazette*, 31 March 1933, p.9; *Dundee Courier*, 4 April 1933, p.4.

<sup>203</sup> *Derry Journal*, 18 August 1933.

In the summer of 1933 Lymington spoke at another mass conservative meeting, this time at the behest of his former military captain, Sir Audley Neeld, another Conservative member. Lymington presented his dissatisfaction with the latest Agricultural Marketing Bill, later to become an act. Lymington thought the bill displayed an unrealistic and hypocritical attitude toward English farmers. He stated that instead of expecting farmers to act like ‘big business men’ who were ‘mostly failing’, farmers should be left free of ‘nosey parker inspectors’ and remain ‘as free as possible to his own job on the land’.<sup>204</sup> Lymington’s reaction to the bill in the Commons does not seem out of line for a typical right-wing Conservative of the period, advocating for protectionism, defenses for agriculture against the ‘devastating influences on agriculture’ and the re-orientating of trade and the economy writ-large out of liberal laissez faire practices and instead into the ‘interests of the nation’.<sup>205</sup> Lymington retained this thinking about the Agricultural Marketing Bill of 1933 and spoke on it at the Kent Branch of the National Farmers Union in December 1933. After outlining why, he thought the bill treated farmers unfairly, Lymington returned to the reoccurring issue of tithe and discussed its uneven and ‘extreme’ applications.<sup>206</sup> As Stuart Ball has elaborated, approaches emphasizing tariff reform, taxes on foreign imports and support of national farming were not abnormal for conservatives of the period and were especially prevalent in those who particularly bent on reviving a ‘concentrated’ conservatism.<sup>207</sup>

Lymington was not averse to voicing concerns over Britain’s imperial status. It was a persistent theme throughout his political activities. During his time as M. P. however, this was often in relation to agriculture at home. His approach to debates in the House of Commons was often one of restoration, always implying a sense of degradation that was to be fixed. This was perhaps voiced clearest to his peers as the ‘increasing sense of despair’ he and his compatriots had regarding British agriculture. Displaying derision at the way the Minister of Agriculture responded to his questions, Lymington declared this was ‘an illustration of the way the whole fundamental question of agriculture is being treated.’<sup>208</sup> Seemingly as an attempt to stoke some sympathy for his crusade for agricultural revival, Lymington framed the British Empire as intrinsically linked with agriculture at home. Indeed,

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<sup>204</sup> *Wiltshire Times and Trowbridge Advertiser*, 17 June 1933, p.6.

<sup>205</sup> HC Deb (20 March 1933). Vol 276. Col. 159-164. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1933/mar/20/agricultural-marketing-bill#S5CV0276P0\\_19330320\\_HOC\\_420](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1933/mar/20/agricultural-marketing-bill#S5CV0276P0_19330320_HOC_420) (Accessed: 10 November 2021).

<sup>206</sup> *Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser*, 15 December 1933, p.22.

<sup>207</sup> Stuart Ball, ‘The Conservative Party, the Role of the State and the Politics of Protection, c.1918-1932’ *History* Vol.96 No.3 (2011) pp.280-303.

<sup>208</sup> HC Deb (26 May 1930). Vol. 239. Col. 949-964. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/may/26/agriculture-government-proposals#S5CV0239P0\\_19300526\\_HOC\\_392](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/may/26/agriculture-government-proposals#S5CV0239P0_19300526_HOC_392) (Accessed: 8 November 2021).

agriculture could be the ‘salvation’ of Britain and its Empire.<sup>209</sup> This was often Lymington’s strategy. On another occasion, Lymington stated ‘If there is one thing the British Empire really needs, it is British agriculture.’<sup>210</sup> Empire was not simply a rhetorical tactic for Lymington, though. On the contrary, as was the case with many ‘diehard’ Conservatives, Empire was a central tenet of their politics. Lymington, on top of his agriculturalism, voiced discontent over the ambition and global standing of the British Empire. Entering a debate about British imperial trading routes and commerce centers, Lymington suggested an increase in their defense to match the expansion of other military powers such as France, Germany, Japan and the United States. Lymington made it clear in the commons he did not believe Britain should be left behind these powers, speaking profusely of the need to defend Britain’s imperial interests across the globe.

‘It has been reckoned that if one takes the coast lines which the British Empire has to defend, and the lines of communication which we have to maintain for commercial purposes, our naval needs are equal to those of the United States, France, Italy and Japan combined.’<sup>211</sup>

Lymington’s anxiety about Britain’s global standing was clear, and he beseeched the Labour government to obtain some ‘foresight’ as well as the safety and reliability of the existing imperial mechanism’s the British Empire relied upon.<sup>212</sup> Lymington was responding to recent geo-political and geo-military changes, particularly the Washington Naval Agreements of the 1920s. In these, Britain’s naval capacity had been severely capped, and as a result increasing threats from the U. S. and Japan to their position as the world’s naval power. As one scholar has argued, such agreements which were made under the guise of arms control and spending reductions, and proceeded to have a levelling effect upon the naval field of play.<sup>213</sup>

This was not aided by the situation in India, a country which had been pillaged by the British Empire and from which Britain had extracted an exorbitant amount of wealth.<sup>214</sup> India had been an increasing point of contention within the Conservative Party, especially as Baldwin had started to acquiesce to Indian nationalist calls for increasing autonomy from British governance. The topic of India played a pivotal role in Lymington’s

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<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> HC Deb (30 April 1930). Vol. 238. Col. 209-79. Available at: [https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/apr/30/death-duties-on-objects-of-art-c#S5CV0238P0\\_19300430\\_HOC\\_264](https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1930/apr/30/death-duties-on-objects-of-art-c#S5CV0238P0_19300430_HOC_264) (Accessed: 4 November 2021).

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Cassady B. Craft, ‘An analysis of the Washington naval agreements and the economic provisions of arms control theory’ *Defence and Peace Economics* Vol.11 No.1 (2000) pp.127-148

<sup>214</sup> Shashi Tharoor, *Inglorious Empire: What the British did to India* (London: Penguin, 2018).

parliamentary career. His place in the Conservative divisions over India is also indicative of his attachment to the British Empire and how it sat in his political mindset.

India, in the imperial British mindset, required British rule. The natural state of Indian society according to the British imperialist was that of chaos and the antithesis to the imagined European sophistication and civilization. This line of thinking has been the subject of scholarly enquiry for some time, was prolific across the British political spectrum and was certainly not confined to the heyday of the British Empire in the Victorian or Edwardian periods.<sup>215</sup> By the time of Lymington's parliamentary career, India had established a long and rebellious relationship with the British Empire, and come the turn of the twentieth century, Indian nationalists were again calling for home rule.<sup>216</sup> To properly cement Lymington in the context of the inter-Conservative imperialist debates that he operated within in the first half of 1930s, some context is required.

To keep to a manageable historical context, we shall begin with the India Act of 1919, but it needs to be stressed that this is not an adequate periodization to explain the debates of the 1930s over India, on which much scholarship has been developed.<sup>217</sup> There were many aspects to the India Act of 1919, but perhaps the key element was the expansion of the political franchise in India. This encouraged nationalist actors in India and in Britain who supported Indian autonomy and various extents of freedom from the throes of British imperialism. This posed questions for imperialists who were intent on retaining power through the Raj over India, but they deemed their case the clearest and almost self-explanatory. Martin Pugh described their confidence, writing that 'from an imperialist perspective the case for maintaining the Indian Raj seemed unanswerable in the 1920s.'<sup>218</sup> Indeed, while Gandhi was to make India's representative body, the Indian National Congress, a more threatening force in the 1930s, India's formal representation had long been comprised of 'educated, westernized men concentrated in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, who had avoided taking up the social-economic issues that concerned ordinary Indians; they valued British rule as a unifying and modernizing force in Indian society too strongly to wish to sweep it suddenly under the carpet.'<sup>219</sup> However, this confidence was misplaced. As with all imperial and colonial projects British power in India could never exist in perpetuity, as James Trafford writes; 'at the kernel of empire lies its own impossibility', because 'the totalizing structures of colonialism are both necessary and impossible.'<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts'*, pp.177-182.

<sup>216</sup> Priyamvada Gopal, *Insurgent Empire: Anticolonial Resistance and British Dissent* (London: Verso, 2019) pp.400-435.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Pugh, *'Hurrah for the Blackshirts'*, p.177.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p.178.

<sup>220</sup> James Trafford, *The Empire at Home* (New York: Duke University Press, 2020) p.xiii.

After 1919 and the expansion of the political franchise in India, the Conservative party saw itself racked by crises of identity, priorities and ideology. The diehards of the party campaigned for the man responsible for the constitutional reform, Edwin Montagu, to be harried from office. They were successful, gathering the support of 129 Conservative MPs and saw out Montagu.<sup>221</sup> The diehards continued with this internal party pressure, ousting the Minister for Health from office in 1921 over their desire for tariff reform. Indeed, the party leader of the early 1920s, Andrew Bonar Law, saw the diehards as ‘a force to be contained’ within the party. This suited the diehards just fine, as they sought to work within the party confines anyway. Fleming does indeed stress the willingness of most diehard conservatives to work within the bounds of democracy; something Lymington was also willing to do, initially.

The divides over the expansion of the Indian political franchise slotted into more longstanding divisions in the party, especially concerning empire and race. The party had at the beginning of the twentieth century struggled through several conflicts, beginning the century with the South African War of 1899-1902 which was not received well in Britain. This was followed by the defeat of the Conservatives in the 1906 general election. This led to the front bench of the Conservatives gradually auguring more of a Liberal conception of Empire, of a ‘loosely structured common-wealth of free nations’ and increasingly ‘disposed to a scheme of provincial self-government in India.’<sup>222</sup> The back bench of the party, comprised of many imperial minded figures, were divided into two loose camps. Fleming labels one of these ‘trimmers and realists’, who favored a ‘broadly bipartisan approach which maintained orthodox fiscal policy and recommended imperial constitutional reform.’<sup>223</sup> On the other side were the diehards, strongly imperial in mindset and with a deep allegiance to an Edwardian Conservatism. They agitated for ‘a resolutely partisan platform with imperial unity and tariff reform at its heart’.<sup>224</sup> In the first half of the 1920s, diehard Conservatives were extremely wary of making further concessions to Indian nationalists but did find the princely and strict hierarchical society alluring. To some, it represented what was being gradually threatened in Britain.<sup>225</sup> There were profound fears in the conservative party, hardly exclusive to the diehard imperialists, that India would follow Ireland and Egypt in obtaining semi-independence.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p.343.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p.345.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Pugh, ‘Hurrah for the Blackshirts’, pp.182-184; N. C. Fleming, ‘Diehard Conservatism, Mass Democracy, and Indian Constitutional Reform’ *Parliamentary History* Vol. 32 No. 2 (2013) pp.337-360 (pp.343-346).

<sup>226</sup> Pugh, ‘Hurrah for the Blackshirts’, pp.183-184.

In 1927, two years before Lymington's entrance into the House of Commons, Baldwin acted early in setting up a statutory commission for India, originally planned for 1929. This was not well received by Indian nationalists, as the commission was made accessible to British parliamentarians only, increasing Indian agitation. Lord Irwin, the Viceroy of India, declared in the year of Lymington's election that 'dominion status was the ultimate goal of British policy in India.'<sup>227</sup> Baldwin, head of the Conservative, supported this and consequently Labour's imperial policy. He declared this was to 'liberalize the Tory party'.<sup>228</sup> The response of the diehards, of which Lymington was one at this point, was one of fury, who sought executive crown control (should the need arise) over Indian representation and for the indisputable power of colonial governors. However, the diehards, largely due to the formation of the National Government, failed to turn their antagonism into a repeat of the early 1920s. Lymington did not hold back in voicing his opposition to the formation of a National Government, stating a 'ministry of all talents would mean replacing a sodden government with seven devils', fearing 'every party would prostitute its principles.'<sup>229</sup> Despite the diehards difficulty in challenging the National Government, what did occur, however, were clear alliances between certain portions of the party over their opposition to the National Government's policy on India.

In December 1931, Winston Churchill spoke in the House of Commons in support of an amendment to the government's Indian policy. This was unsurprising, as Churchill had a reputation for being infatuated with India as a British province. This focus was noted by several MPs, including Leo Amery. Such was the 'tittering' at Churchill's concern over democracy being opened in India, that Amery noted it in his diaries.<sup>230</sup> Churchill advocated for the following lines to be additionally included in the governmental Indian Policy.

'Provided that nothing in the said policy shall commit this House to the establishment in India of a Dominion constitution as defined by the Statute of Westminster; provided also that the said policy shall effectively safeguard British trade in and with India from adverse or prejudicial discrimination; and provided further that no extensions of self-government in India at this juncture shall impair the ultimate responsibility of Parliament for the peace, order, and good government of the Indian Empire.'<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Fleming, 'Diehard Conservatism', p.346.

<sup>228</sup> Fleming 'Diehard Conservatism', p.346; Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge,1999), pp.266-7.

<sup>229</sup> Viscount Lymington, *Ich Dien: A Tory Path* (London: Constable, 1931) p.124.

<sup>230</sup> Fleming 'Diehard Conservative', p.353; *Empire at Bay*, ed. Barnes and Nicholson, p.388: Amery, Diary, 1 Nov 1934.

<sup>231</sup> HC Deb (3 December 1931). Vol. 260. Col. 1287. Available at: <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1931/dec/03/indian-policy> (Accessed: 5 November 2021).

Churchill, despite having a somewhat inconsistent relationship with the diehards of the Conservative backbench, as discussed by Fleming, echoed in this amendment much of their imperial priorities.<sup>232</sup> The establishment of a specifically Indian constitution which provided the country with their own source of legislative power was off the table for Churchill. There was also the key emphasis on whatever form the alterations to Indian rule take, there was to be no impediment to the executive powers of the British Empire over India; Britain's rule was paramount. There is then perhaps the closest mirror to Lymington's own priorities as suggested in his speeches earlier, that the defense of Empire and the shoring up of its defenses and trade routes should be a priority of the government. Churchill seeking the protection of 'British trade in and with India' was in line with Lymington's imperial concerns. In fact, Churchill led a small rebellion, obtaining the support of 43 MPs in pushing his suggestions.<sup>233</sup> The 43 MPs included long-term diehards like Sir Henry Croft and Colonel John Caine, but also younger and fresher diehard imperialists, like Lymington.

In 1933, Lymington partook in another rebellious faction, this time on the subject of India and the organization of M. P.s was called the India Defence League. High profile figures involved include Churchill, Viscount Sumner, Viscount Wolmer, the Duke of Westminster and Brigadier-General Sir Henry Page Croft. It was through the India Defence League that Lymington acted on his beliefs regarding India. In response to the group forming Baldwin came out in open support of government policy, which undoubtedly contributed to Lymington's growing dissatisfaction with the party and state. The white paper which Baldwin defended was part of a larger effort for further constitutional reform in India. The India Defence League signed the following statement in response.

'To imperil the peace of India, to jeopardize the vast trade that has brought so much benefit and employment to both communities, to strike at the main and central strength of the British Empire by such an experiment would be, in our judgement, a fatal dereliction of duty.'<sup>234</sup>

Throughout 1933, Lymington spoke on behalf of the India Defence League in public lectures and debates. One such event was held on 20 November in Kings Lynn, at which Lymington was the chief speaker alongside Lord Fermoy M. P. The topic was the governing of India.<sup>235</sup>

There is no doubt that Lymington can only be considered right-leaning on India, even by the standards of Conservatives of the day. Like Churchill and many other staunch imperialists and diehards, his position was one

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<sup>232</sup> Fleming 'Diehard Conservative', pp.353-357.

<sup>233</sup> *The Times*, 5 December 1931.

<sup>234</sup> *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 2 June 1933, p.74.

<sup>235</sup> *Lynn News and County Press*, 14 November 1933; *Weekly Dispatch London*, 19 November 1933, p.7.



of empire first. Churchill was situated alongside another figure who prioritized empire, Sir Lloyd George. To diehards like Lympington, these men represented a ‘throwback’ to earlier figures of British imperial rule, like former viceroy, Lord Curzon.<sup>236</sup> They also represented an ideal opposition to those figures, such as Baldwin and Labour, who wished to see varying degrees of imperial reform.

It is worth recalling here Edward Said’s analysis of what imperialists like Curzon thought, and therefore what they represented to men like Churchill and Lympington. To ‘a very great extent’ men like Curzon and their ideas on Empire ‘derive logically from a good century of British utilitarian administration’.<sup>237</sup> To Curzon, and subsequently Churchill, Lloyd George and Lympington, empire was ‘not an object of ambition’ but ‘first and foremost a great historical and political and sociological fact.’<sup>238</sup> Indeed, their views of empire were idealist, but can be paralleled with the following quote from Lord Curzon himself.

‘I sometimes like to picture to myself this great Imperial fabric as a huge structure like some Tennysonian ‘Palace of Art’ of which the foundations are in this country, where they have been laid and must be maintained by British hands, but of which the colonies are the pillars’.<sup>239</sup>

Empire set the scene of Lympington’s political imagination, and he was epistemically reliant on its structuring force. Indeed, as Edward Said has examined in his other works like *Culture and Imperialism*, the British Empire formed a key bordering backdrop to political figures like Lympington and this has to be considered as we examine his trajectory.<sup>240</sup> In the scene of 1930s British parliament, however, there were specific reasons as to why Lympington and his comrades were fixated on India as a component of the British Empire set against these imperialist ideals. For one, India represented a keystone in the British Asian markets, as we have seen. There is then the fact that should India be conceded to, it would increase the already declining global standing of the British Empire as the leading global capitalist power. Indeed, Pugh comments on Lympington’s view of imperial decline, writing he (along with others) ‘claimed to detect the hand of Jews in this pattern of imperial disintegration.’<sup>241</sup> There were, however, other reasons.

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<sup>236</sup> Pugh, ‘Hurrah for the Blackshirts’, p.181.

<sup>237</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003) p.212.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p.213.

<sup>239</sup> George Nathaniel Curzon, *Subjects of the Day: Being a Selection of Speeches and Writings* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915) pp.27-28.

<sup>240</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994), pp.87-94.

<sup>241</sup> Pugh, ‘Hurrah for the Blackshirts’, p.181.

Lymington, as well as much of the Conservative back bench with which he allied himself, owed much to the Edwardian and Victorian ideological right of British politics. This often manifested in quasi-feudal conceptions of society and a deep royalism.<sup>242</sup> As shall be seen throughout this study but especially in the studies of Lymington's own organisations, his political outlook was deeply tied to English royalism. Indeed, being a member of the royalist English Mistery for four of the five years as an MP, it is not surprising it played a pivotal factor in his formal political propositions. This was clearly the case with India. Lymington saw in India certain royalist aspects which appealed to his own mythic royalism. Indian princes and their rule, to Lymington, represented not a show of power but were in fact its natural form, a natural authority. In his own papers, Lymington recorded his views on the situation in India and its princely rule, particularly how they were an example of royal rule England was losing, it made them 'not only the keystone of our empire in India, but of the utmost importance for the recreation of English kingship which remains as a tradition in the hearts of Englishmen'.<sup>243</sup> This, however, had been 'abandoned in the practice of English government.'<sup>244</sup>

Lymington was in contact with a series of journalists in India, such as a Mr. D. Mahavo Rao, who was involved with the *Morning Post in India*. Lymington's contacts in India became most useful immediately after his resignation from parliament in 1934, as he was then free to travel to India for a group comprised of diehard imperialists named The Indian Defence League. This was perhaps where he completed his most influential and impactful work, if not as an M. P. then still as an operator for diehard interests. Lymington visited India in early 1934 to mobilize advocates for princely rule and met with several princes themselves.<sup>245</sup> These included powerful figures such as the Maharaja of Patiala, the Maharaja of Mysore and the Nizam of Hyderabad. Looming over these interactions was the possibility of an imperially ratified British-Indian federation, a project hankered after by Baldwin. In the eyes of the princes, however, this was suspicious, as Pugh illuminates; 'most princes wanted India to remain an integral part of the empire and they preferred to be linked to the new government by treaties with the crown.'<sup>246</sup> Thus, they made for ideal allies in the view of 'empire first' diehards like Lymington. In an effort to undermine the policy of Baldwin and the National Government, Lymington spread 'doubts about the strength of government at home' and that 'Conservative opposition has had the upper hand in England'.<sup>247</sup> Lymington reported that 80 of the 104 royals in the Chamber of Princes were not in favor of the British

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<sup>242</sup> E. H. H. Green *Crisis of Conservatism* pp.153-180; Fleming 'Diehard Conservative', p.353.

<sup>243</sup> Undated Memorandum, 15M84/F421, pp.1-2.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Pugh, p.192.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.; Undated Memorandum, 15M84/F421.

government's proposals and persuaded them that they should decline the offer to join the federation offered in early 1934. Lynington reported back from his trip 'news of great importance', that while 'nothing of all this has appeared in the British Press', the 'princes have rejected federation.'<sup>248</sup> Lynington was pleased about the royal figures of the colonial province rejecting what he saw as attempted erosion of monarchic rule. It was also in line with his view that democracy must not be brought to India. Lynington lamented those who suggested imperial reform in India and concessions to nationalists, writing with disdain of the 'present effort to foist an alien, bastard democracy on British India.'<sup>249</sup> This was an 'unequivocal victory' for the diehard imperialists, striking a substantial blow against the project of imperial reformation. This was also one of the last times Lynington operated directly in the favor of state representative, as after his resignation he began to operate in almost exclusively extra-parliamentary and journalistic settings, to be examined shortly. Beforehand, the reasons for his exit from parliament will be explained.

Lynington resigned from parliament in 1934, a year before the diehards were served major defeat in the form of the India Act 1935, which led to the creation of the Reserve Bank of India and mandated the construction of an Indian federal court. Lynington had long been skeptical of the capacity for parliament to serve his political ideals, and as will be revealed in the following chapter, upon joining the English Ministry, four years before his resignation from parliament, he had started to voice his doubts over the potential of democracy. Lynington perceived a loss of values, specifically what he saw as traditional Tory values, that had been eroded away by democracy, the loss of agriculture, the emasculation of the House of Lords, and changes over the Conservative party's relationship with private property.<sup>250</sup> This was largely due, in his perception, to a fundamental difference between Tory and Conservative history. The Tory was far more cognizant to a people's history and aware of the dangers of 'decay' and degradation. He summarized his political feelings in his 1931 text, *Ich Dien: A Tory Path*, in which he explained his resignation from parliament. The following is a revealing excerpt.

'The difference between modern Conservatism and Toryism is that the modern Conservative too often ceases to regard history after it has disappeared from living memory. The Tory takes a deeper view, in that instinctively he tries to discern between the growth and decay of functions in the application of history to modern issues. Thus

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<sup>248</sup> Viscount Lynington, 'The Situation in India', Undated Memorandum, 15M84/F255/19.

<sup>249</sup> Undated Memorandum, 15M84/F421.

<sup>250</sup> David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (London: Penguin, 2005); Matthew Cragoe, Paul Readman (eds) *The Land Question in Britain 1750-1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

to the Conservative what has become an established fact in the last twenty-five years, becomes if it has any pretense at all to conform with Conservatism, an object for indiscriminate conservation.’<sup>251</sup>

While in parliament Lymington also used his book, *Ich Dien*, to voice his opposition to the political enfranchisement of women, and he held the expansion of the franchise in disdain. Lymington abstained along with 135 other Conservatives in 1929 from voting in support of a bill supporting the creation of a more egalitarian political franchise. Lymington wrote in his 1931 text that the conservatives misunderstood the meaning of leadership and were mistakenly focused on giving ‘the franchise to girls instead of educating them to the hearth’.<sup>252</sup> Being opposed to the expansion of political inclusion was just another string in Lymington’s anti-democratic bow. Indeed, his favored ideals of Toryism were ‘not and cannot be democratic in the political sense of the word.’<sup>253</sup> Toryism had an intrinsic incompatibility with democracy as it was deeply intertwined with feudalism, it was a ‘relic’ of it.<sup>254</sup> In the mind of Lymington, ‘to be uncompromising on principle, whether over India, defense, or home politics, is to be unable to adapt oneself to party politics’.<sup>255</sup> On 19 March 1934 it was reported that Lymington had resigned and ‘accepted the office Steward or Bailiff of the Chiltern Hundreds’, signaling his exit from the commons.<sup>256</sup> It was also reported that the Foreign Secretary was glad to lend his support to Lymington’s successor, as they were a supporter of the National Government, implying they were glad to see the back of their imperial opposition.<sup>257</sup>

The ideals Lymington espoused, fears he professed, and priorities he developed during his time in the House of Commons crystalized in the first half of the 1930s. His fear over agricultural decline and the consequences on racial health became profound, but high politics did not see him voice such opinions as explicitly. The English Mystery, and subsequently the English Array, provided far more accessible and receptive avenues for Lymington to indulge his growing dissatisfaction.

To summarize Lymington’s parliamentary experience, it can be said he made valuable contacts and earned himself a reputation as a key member of the diehard Conservative right. Working alongside prominent figures such as Lloyd George and Winston Churchill, befriending Conservative upstarts like Michael Beaumont, and providing staunch opposition to Baldwin could only have enhanced his public profile. However, regarding his intellectual

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<sup>251</sup> Viscount Lymington, *Ich Dien: The Tory Path* (London: Constable, 1931) p.117.

<sup>252</sup> Lymington, *Ich Dien*, p.20.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>255</sup> *The Times*, 16 February 1934.

<sup>256</sup> *The Times*, 29 March 1934.

<sup>257</sup> *The Times*, 16 April 1934.

development, parliament frustrated him into developing further his disposition toward reactionary imperial ideals. His allegiance to the British Empire molded with a deep anti-democracy he developed through the English Mistery and his frequent parliamentary frustrations. Indeed, three years after his exit from parliament he wrote in a private letter that he does not think 'that there can be any hope in democratic politics until we have undergone a complete change of values and standards.'<sup>258</sup> We shall now turn to the English Mistery.

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<sup>258</sup> Lymington to L. G. L. Bussell Esq., 13 December 1937, 15M84/F147/57.

## The English Mistery

By Lymington's own admission the English Mistery had a profound impact on his worldview, and deeply affected his political orientations throughout his time as an M. P. It featured several times in his later autobiography, in which the group is painted in a perhaps more benign way than the archival evidence suggests it was.<sup>259</sup> Founded in 1930 by William Sanderson, a former freemason, member of the Imperial Fascist League and prior the anti-Semitic Order of the Red Rose, the English Mistery was premised constitutionally on much of Sanderson's own work. He founded the group with three other men, two of whom were not big players in the British far-right milieu; Norman Swan, Bryant Irvine and Ben Shaw. Swan and Shaw seem to have been drawn from political obscurity, perhaps connected to Sanderson's previous activities in the IFL, but they faded with him back into it upon the split in the English Mistery. Bryant Irvine, however, became close with Lymington, joined him in the Array and would later be elected Conservative M. P. for Rye, beginning his political career with the Mistery in his early 20s.<sup>260</sup>

Sanderson was intent on recapturing the 'lost secrets of governance', of which England must return to, to survive the perceived era of decay. These secrets, which together added up to a loose political and distinctly English philosophy, had several core themes. These were memory, government, power, organization, (private) property, religion (Christianity), money, economics, foreign policy, imperialism, royalism, and race.<sup>261</sup> Sanderson created the English Mistery as an organization to engender his quest to grasp once again these values, furthering a type of national regeneration project. Indeed, Sanderson perceived these values to have been corroded by internal and external forces, be they communist or Jew, and thus the 'body politic' had been undermined.<sup>262</sup> As we shall see, these notions were imbued into the constitutional literature of the Mistery and its ideology, as well as its members.

Lymington joined the English Mistery in 1931 after Sanderson approached him following an expression of Lymington's early dissatisfaction with parliament. This opened Lymington up to not only contact with Sanderson and their subsequent personal and political relationship, which eventually soured, but a long-term friend in Anthony Ludovici who joined the same year. The Nietzschean eugenicist had by this point published multiple antisemitic and reactionary texts, including his book *A Defence of Aristocracy: A Text Book for Tories*, which in

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<sup>259</sup> Gerard Vernon Wallop, *A Knot of Roots: An Autobiography* (Chicago: New American Library, 1965) p.128.

<sup>260</sup> Dan Stone, 'The English Mistery, the BUF and the Dilemmas of British Fascism' *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol.75 No.2 (2003) pp.336-358 (p.340).

<sup>261</sup> William Sanderson, *Statecraft: A Treatise on the Concerns of our Sovereign Lord the King* (London: Constable, 1932).

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.25-38.

its call for a reinvigorated English aristocracy spoke of the problematic ‘illegitimate Jew’, racial ‘instinct’ and the detrimental effects of ‘indiscriminate cross-breeding’ amongst races.<sup>263</sup> It was Ludovici’s ideas and his ideological engagement with the increasing aristocratic anxiety of the early twentieth century which probably attracted him to Sanderson, but that was another relationship which eventually broke. Ludovici and Lymington saw a great deal of intellectual traffic and through the Mistery developed a reciprocal political influence on each other. Ludovici’s violently antisemitic book on the history of Jews in England as well as his pseudonym ‘Cobbett’, an ode to the rural celebratory text of the nineteenth century, both took inspiration from Lymington.<sup>264</sup> Alternatively, Lymington frequently sent drafts of papers and essays to Ludovici for his feedback. Ludovici’s usage of ‘Cobbett’ is a clear example of the British fascist tradition drawing upon a romanticism of Victorian and, later, Edwardian Britain. Indeed, Liam Liburd made this point too about the BUF, showing how Britain’s traditional culture and political apparatus’ often inspired and shaped Britain’s inter-war fascists.<sup>265</sup>

Study of the English Mistery also offers an opportunity to track Lymington’s political development. He became a leading member of the Mistery, and Sanderson placed all his faith in the young aristocrat. Through the 1930’s, the Mistery became as much a product of Lymington as well as Sanderson, with input from their resident academic voice in Ludovici. The Mistery has also received far less scholarly attention than the British Union of Fascists. This is understandable given the greater size of the BUF and its growth into a ‘mature’ form of fascism, but as Stone has pointed out, we can garner valuable insights into the ideological proliferation of ideas as well as revealing political expression of fascist ideas in groups like the Mistery.<sup>266</sup> The Mistery and Array were in many ways distinctively English expressions of fascism, collating what Stone called ‘extremes of Englishness’ together, drawing upon notions of English Anglo-Saxon identity and mixing them transnationally with continental ideas of fascism and national socialism.<sup>267</sup> To explicate this, the ideology of the English Mistery will now be presented through a mining of its constitutional literature and the publications of its members, with a focus on Lymington’s contributions.

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<sup>263</sup> Anthony Ludovici, *A Defence of Aristocracy: A Textbook for Tories* (London, 1915) p.107; p.302.

<sup>264</sup> Anthony Mario Ludovici, John V. Day (ed), *The Confessions of an Anti-Feminist: The Autobiography of Anthony M. Ludovici* (New York: Counter Currents Publishing, 2018) p.189-192, p.245-249.

<sup>265</sup> Liburd, ‘Beyond the Pale’, p.276

<sup>266</sup> Stone, *Breeding Superman*, pp.45-52.

<sup>267</sup> Dan Stone, ‘The Ultimate Cross-Cultural Fertiliser’: The Irony of the ‘Transnational Local’ in Anglo-German Rural Revivalism, *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* Vol.26 No.6 (2019) pp.996-1012.

### The Political Character of the English Mistery

The driving emotion of the English Mistery was that of decline and degeneration. Racial, aristocratic, Conservative, economic and royal corrosion fed and informed its political ideology. This framing most clearly demonstrates the necessity of placing the English Mistery in the context it survived in, not in a vacuum. A link between the Mistery and the pervasive feeling of decline in early twentieth century Britain can be seen in Ludovici's text *Defence of Conservatism*, which while published years before the formation of the Mistery mirrored several of its ideals. For example, calls for increasing focus on Conservative reformulation, eugenic solutions and warnings against miscegenation were all central to Ludovici's 1927 publication. Conservatism was presented by Ludovici as something of 'enormous value' because it allowed the buildup of 'family qualities, group virtues, national character, and racial characteristics.'<sup>268</sup> Jews were represented as fundamentally incompatible with the traditions of England. Directed at Conservatives who Ludovici had felt lackluster in their battle against growing 'alien invasion', he wrote 'can Conservatives with any pretense of sanity allow the multiplication of thoroughly undesirable human material to continue any longer unrestricted?'.<sup>269</sup> Ludovici mentions multiple times problems of miscegenation and that heredity and a eugenic approach to 'breeding' is something particularly fostered by his vision of Conservatism.<sup>270</sup> This background is what Ludovici brought to the table of the English Mistery.

In the Mistery's constitution, which were published under the title of 'orders', we find clearly stated its purpose to 'regenerate the English Nation and to recreate a body politic'.<sup>271</sup> The Mistery members all had to declare their allegiance to the king; 'The English Mistery is composed of members sworn to loyalty to the King of England and the principles of English Royalism.'<sup>272</sup> One objective of the group was to 'coordinate all human activities in the service of the English race'<sup>273</sup>, and it demanded a return to tradition; 'the object of the English Mistery is to restore tradition as the only proper foundation of government'.<sup>274</sup> To do this, the Mistery advocated for 'service' or 'action', interestingly a politic which Thomas Linehan suggests fascists consistently reverted to.<sup>275</sup> This service

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<sup>268</sup> Anthony Ludovici, *A Defence of Conservatism: A Further Text-Book for Tories* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927) p.2.

<sup>269</sup> Anthony Ludovici, *A Defence of Conservatism: A Further Text-Book for Tories* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1927) p.251.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>271</sup> The English Mistery, 'Order of 1930 No.1', 15M84/F396, p.1.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> The English Mistery, 'Order of the English Mistery No.33' (The English Mistery: London, 1933).

<sup>274</sup> The English Mistery, 'Order of 1930 No.7', 15M84/F396, p.1.

<sup>275</sup> Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-1939: Parties Ideology and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001) pp.20-24.



or action was understood by the Mistery to be in protection of the English race, to ‘eradicate every vested interest.’<sup>276</sup> This sinister line of thinking was to be a dominant concern of the English Mistery, and the violence within its ideological picture can be grasped by considering the work of Anthony Ludovici, who contributed to and exemplified the eugenic violence espoused by the Mistery’s politics. It also added a further dimension to the racial eugenics of the Mistery; anti-feminism, which shall be considered first.

In October 1933 Anthony Ludovici presented to the English Mistery his essay ‘Violence, Sacrifice and War’. Ludovici expounded a feeling of distinct terror over the threat to white civilization and his racial group. Ludovici suggested a duplicate threat of invasion, one peaceful and one violent. The former was in the form of a subversive limiting of a ‘proud conquering imperial race’ in its reproduction, through the form of abortion.<sup>277</sup> Ludovici lamented how the ‘male had ceased to rule’, and that a ‘peaceful invasion’ had taken place by way of a gradual emasculation of society. In Ludovici and the Mistery’s eyes, society had been ‘left to the female, who always stands of anarchy’.<sup>278</sup> Sanderson wrote similarly of women, as seen here.

‘Her instincts, as well as her emotions are entirely sexual, like the structure of her body...She has a total ineptitude for politics, for she lacks political virtue. Having no social instincts she can develop no intellectual capacity for constructive art or organization.’<sup>279</sup>

Sanderson suggested ‘careful breeding’ and a return to ‘masculine characteristics’, contributing to what can be understood as a racial, anti-feminist and militaristic male renaissance.<sup>280</sup> Ludovici’s view that the emancipation of women and the increased freedom of birth control and abortion services provided them contributed to a denigration of racial health was also adopted by Lynington, who wrote ‘The equality of the sexes in occupation is the greatest danger our race has to face today.’<sup>281</sup> Richard Overy has discussed the ties between the anti-birth control movements of the 1920s and the eugenic movements suggesting a state of racial decline, writing ‘they were linked in the post-war world with the widespread public fear that the quality of the population was declining to a point that threatened the continued existence of a vigorous imperial race and imperiled civilization itself.’<sup>282</sup> In assessing the English Mistery, one does not have to turn to continental fascisms to find the roots of its anti-feminist response to a perceived racial degeneration, but simply the decades before World War One where

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<sup>276</sup> The English Mistery, ‘Order of 1933 No.8’, 15M84/F400.

<sup>277</sup> Anthony Ludovici, *Violence, Sacrifice and War* (London: The English Mistery, 1934) p.4.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> William Sanderson, *Statecraft*, pp.6-10.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>281</sup> Gerard Wallop, *Ich Dien: A Tory Path* (London, 1931), p.42.

<sup>282</sup> Richard Overy, *A Morbid Age*, pp.94-98.

conversations were being had in the British metropole over the importance of racial and national efficiency. The difference in the age of the English Mistery was that after an amalgam of European and colonial resistance to British interference, new economic decline following World War One and an increased emphasis on eugenic racial decline, the gradual emancipation of women added another string to the bow of an authentic English fascism.

Continuing with Ludovici's text, in his mind abortion was being supported by some sections of society to force the white man to 'keep pace with...such inferior races as negroes, eskimoes, mongoloids of all kinds and negritos, and such mongrel populations as the Levantines, the South Americans and the hybrids of South Africa.'<sup>283</sup> The justification given for this thinking was a profoundly racist white chauvinism guised thinly in Malthusian population theory, an indication of Ludovici's imperial mindset. This was not the first or last time Malthusian theory regarding population control was invoked in the defense of existing or prospective atrocities. Indeed, as Mike Davis showed in *Late Victorian Holocausts*, 'Malthusian principles, updated by Social Darwinism, were regularly invoked to legitimize Indian famine policy at home in England.'<sup>284</sup>

In response to these threats Ludovici advocated violence. He wrote this threat to the race would continue until 'the best and highest race is in complete possession of the world'.<sup>285</sup> Indeed, the right to rule was the white mans' right. To justify this right, he referred to the 'successes' of his ancestors, essentially delving into a deep cultural imperialism manifested and guised as 'tradition', which had in no way dissipated in this period.<sup>286</sup> One of several rights enjoyed by this tradition was the right to respond to violence which 'kills men unselectively'.<sup>287</sup> What Ludovici meant by 'unselective' killing was killing not in aid of the elimination of unfavorable racial traits or 'stock', that was not part of his eugenic outlook. This is where we reach the conclusion of Ludovici's thinking: slaughter.<sup>288</sup> Ludovici's eugenic ideal contained within it a notion of sacrifice, that certain inferior traits and people would be exterminated for the good of the ruling race. While the following passage is sinister, it is worth quoting in full:

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>284</sup> Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001) p.35.

<sup>285</sup> Anthony Ludovici, *Violence, Sacrifice and War* (London: The English Mistery, 1934) pp.1-3.

<sup>286</sup> For demonstrations of the imperialist backdrop embedded in the British cultural episteme, see; Edward W. Said, *Culture & Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993).

<sup>287</sup> Ludovici, *Violence Sacrifice and War*, p.5.

<sup>288</sup> 'Slaughter' was also used by Dan Stone to describe Ludovici's logical conclusion, in; Dan Stone, *Breeding Superman: Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002) pp.33-61, pp.115-134.

‘wise rulership will consciously decide what form the sacrifice is to take, and in the case of a brave and great nation, will not hesitate to abandon all such suicidal notions as homosexuality, heterosexual vice, birth control, infanticide, emasculations...and will distribute the burden of sacrifice over inferior races, and inferior products in all classes at home.’<sup>289</sup>

Here we can clearly see the extreme nature of racial eugenic thought that was flowing through the English Mystery. Indeed, as was pointed out by Andre Pichot, ‘struggle, competition and selection were omnipresent’ in the biological understanding of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’.<sup>290</sup> The English Mystery, however, held a distinct version of a negative eugenic ideal, one in which the ‘hierarchy of races is based on the pattern of aristocratic hierarchy’.<sup>291</sup> That, as Pichot elucidates upon, the white race was in the mind of eugenicists like Ludovici the ‘aristocracy of humanity’.<sup>292</sup>

The eugenic focus on heredity was a logical extension of the group’s fixation on an emasculated aristocracy and monarchy. The group, according to Sanderson, was a ‘stronghold for all who actuated royalism’.<sup>293</sup> Not only did the group raise their glasses after every meeting to the king and sign every official letter with an expression of service to the monarch, but they also sought to repudiate democratic procedure for aristocratic rule. Indeed, it was stated by Sanderson that the organization aimed at ‘substituting aristocracy for democracy.’<sup>294</sup> However, this aristocratic responsibility would begin with those individuals that were not ‘capable’ of leadership. The Mystery was of the position that only a few people, those with the correct ‘blood’ and societal standing, could lead. This is made clear in their explanation of ‘leadership’. It was stated in their constitution that a leader was a ‘man of taste’, someone who ‘put their responsibilities of service before individual success.’<sup>295</sup> The notion of ‘taste’ was frequently used in the writings and meetings of the English Mystery but has been somewhat glazed over by historians who have approached the group so far. Bernhard Dietz, despite spending a substantial amount of time on the group does not approach its meaning, while Dan Stone and Martin Pugh label it as simply a concern of the group. The term, however, has more revealing meanings. To expound the term, we can turn to cultural theorist Stuart Hall and his essay ‘Race, the floating Signifier: What More Is There to Say about ‘Race’?’.

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<sup>289</sup> Anthony Ludovici, *Violence, Sacrifice and War* (London: The English Mystery, 1934) p.15.

<sup>290</sup> Andre Pichot, *The Pure Society: From Darwin to Hitler* (London: Verso, 2009) pp.335-339.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> The English Mystery, ‘Orders of 1930 No.4’ (London: The English Mystery), 15M84/F396, p.5.

<sup>295</sup> The English Mystery, ‘Orders of 1933 No.1’ (London: The English Mystery), 15M84/F397, p.2.

Hall, in his quest to expound a meaning of race that is not dependent on untenable biological theories, proposes a socio-historical or cultural understanding of race.<sup>296</sup> Proposing that race is more like a language than physiologically constituted, Hall's theory of understanding race as a 'sliding signifier' can be applied to the discourse and ideas of the English Mistery. Indeed, understanding 'signifiers' as Hall did, as 'the systems and concepts of the classification of a culture, to its practices for making meaning'.<sup>297</sup> Those things obtain their given meanings through the shifting relations of difference, and not their essence. Thus, their meaning is not historically fixed or temporally concentered, but undergoes a constant process of redefinition and appropriation.<sup>298</sup> Race, ultimately, 'works as a language', and is subject to 'the endless process of being signified, made to mean something different in different cultures, in different historical formations at different moments in time.'<sup>299</sup>

The English Mistery and its ideas cannot be studied in a vacuum. If the concept of 'taste', as understood by the English Mistery, is examined, it reveals a driving racial politic. The following excerpt is the Mistery's own description of 'taste'.

'Taste is the capacity to choose between good and evil in breeding, diet, habits and direction of energy. In essence it springs from the maintenance of a perfect balance of instincts.'<sup>300</sup>

The evident signal here that 'taste' is necessarily related to the English Mistery's understanding of race is the explicit nod to their eugenic outlook, namely 'breeding', and the notion there is an 'evil' option in that process indicates an exclusionary outlook that played into their eugenic system. That system was, according to the Mistery, warranted due to the threat to white civilization and as per their literature part of their quest to 'regenerate the English Nation.'<sup>301</sup> Additionally, there is the notion of a correct 'direction of energy'.<sup>302</sup> The closest explanation to the meaning of this can be found in its 'objects' or objectives. Number three in its list of 'objects' is 'to co-ordinate Energy'. There is another revealing term in this passage, the 'body politic', which shall be attended to shortly. The energy they are discussing is in essence 'service', seen in this excerpt.

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<sup>296</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Race, the Floating Signifier: What More is There to Say About 'Race'' in Paul Gilroy and Ruth Wilson Gilmore (eds) *Stuart Hall: Selected Writings on Race and Difference* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021) pp. 359-373.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, p.362.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> The English Mistery, 'Orders of 1933 No.3' (London: English Mistery, 1933), p.2.

<sup>301</sup> The English Mistery, 'Order of 1930 No.1' (London: English Mistery 1930), p.1.

<sup>302</sup> The English Mistery, 'Orders of 1933 No.3' (London: English Mistery, 1933) p.2.

‘Everyone who is capable of contributing his proper quota of service is a potential member of the body politic. It is only if this energy is properly directed that he can function properly...there can be no satisfactory body politic unless the energy of every member is consistently directed.’<sup>303</sup>

Thus, energy ought to be directed into service. Which, according to the second of its objects, entailed devotion to the English race.<sup>304</sup> Indeed, it was the duty of all to serve, according to the same passage.<sup>305</sup> What the English Mystery understood ‘taste’ to mean was to serve the English race, the white race. In line with their own confessions, the duty of every man was to ‘not serve their immediate interest, but the ultimate good of his race.’<sup>306</sup> Should an individual contribute their quota of service to the race, they are then considered a viable member of the ‘body politic’. The latter is another revealing term and one easier to grasp. If someone directs their energy toward the service of the English race, they become a member of a ‘body politic’ represented in terms adjacent to an ideal type. Subsequently, if we return to Stuart Hall, we can see that the language of the English Mystery is not always explicit in its racism, the racial backdrop to their language thinly disguised in seemingly esoteric terms such as ‘body politic’ or ‘taste’, instincts, or energy. These terms, however, were understood by the English Mystery in clearly racial parentheses, and the racial element of their discourse slides behind these terms with little friction. A belief in the innate superiority of the white English race and a defense of its imperial possessions was key to both Lymington and the Mystery and cannot be disconnected or presented as anomalous in 1930s Britain.

There can be no doubt that the English Mystery was an organization which drew as its inspiration notions of racial, aristocratic and agricultural decline, all of which preceded it as political feelings present in British society. As racial decline was such a pervasive force in the context of the English Mystery, it found expression alongside the espousals of their prime ideologues; the anti-Semitism of William Sanderson, the violent eugenics and anti-feminist thought of Ludovici, and the rural aristocratic revivalism of Viscount Lymington. These three men held the leading roles in the English Mystery. The latter, as we saw partially in the first chapter on Lymington as an M. P., was active in his public role. There were clear links between the notions of agricultural decline in the Mystery and the issues Lymington espoused in parliament and in his capacity as an agriculturalist. For example, Lymington spoke in March 1933 on the degrading effects of tithe charges on ‘national health’ as president of the National Tithe Payers Association, and elsewhere publicly spoke of the land as ‘the real heart of the nation’.<sup>307</sup> Indeed, the

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<sup>303</sup> The English Mystery, ‘Orders of 1930 No.7’ (London: English Mystery, 1930) p.1.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> The English Mystery, ‘Orders of 1930 No.7’ (London: English Mystery, 1930) p.2.

<sup>307</sup> *Western Morning News*, 16 March 1933, p.5; *Hampshire Advertiser*, 28 January 1933, p.2.

English body and English land playing such an important role in what can only be described as an ultra-nationalist politic was not out of the ordinary in either the Mistery or amongst certain strains of the Conservative party. Lymington concentrated these thoughts in his 1932 text *Horn, Hoof and Corn: The Future of British Agriculture*, which did receive some press recognition.<sup>308</sup> In the text Lymington presented ideas not alien to the Mistery: that, should the land continue to fail to be cared for and continue to suffer under corrupted foreign foods and interests, as well the ‘townminded’, then the English race would continue to ‘decline’, seemingly in perpetuity.<sup>309</sup> It can be said that Lymington’s public activities and espousals were certainly not in disagreement with the Mistery’s ideas, and, in fact, there was a reciprocal appreciation between the two. Now, the effort will be made to outline the structure of the group, its roles, and activities. As we shall see, the structure of the group reflected its strong royalist coloring and hierarchical inclinations.

### The Structure of the English Mistery

The English Mistery frequently met for meetings, provide lectures and administrative updates, give out new ‘orders’ to its members and generally convene and discuss recent events. These were often recorded by the organization’s secretary, or ‘recorder’. One of these meetings or ‘camps’ was held in 1934 at the stately home of Hurstbourne in Hampshire. The manor was owned by Lymington’s family, and he had invited the group down to it for their second assembly of the year. It was a formal affair, and examining some proceedings and discussions provides an insightful platform into the English Mistery’s structure. While Lymington himself described the meet as a ‘holiday camp’,<sup>310</sup> the objective was not relaxation. Lasting for three days, the camp had a strict schedule. The morning reveille was at 06:45AM every day, promptly followed by a patriotic ceremony involving the unfurling of the St. Georges flag. A military man and member named Captain Mansfield oversaw morning exercise, with a breakfast following. Then, various workshops commenced and lasted much of the day. In the case of the camp in question, most discussions revolved around agricultural technologies and the rearing of livestock, predominantly pigs.<sup>311</sup> At 17:30 formal assemblies started, and this official procedure provides insight into the structure of the Mistery.

In total silence the English Mistery members raised their glasses to God and King. This was followed by a prayer, and then a formal reading of the administrative records over the past months. In the second assembly of 1934,

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<sup>308</sup> *Truth*, 8 June 1932, p.41.

<sup>309</sup> Viscount Lymington, *Horn, Hoof and Corn: The Future of British Agriculture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932) pp.48-55.

<sup>310</sup> English Mistery, ‘The Second Assembly of the Hurstbourne Park Camp’, 1934, p.2, 15M84/F414/2/5.

<sup>311</sup> English Mistery, ‘The Second Assembly of the Hurstbourne Park Camp’, 1934, p.1, 15M84/F414/2/5.

Lymington, sat near the front of the assembly hall next to William Sanderson, reminded all present members that half of the income their local 'kin' receives must be sent to the group treasurer. 'Kins' were Sanderson's chosen name for local bases of the English Mistery, essentially regional outposts of the organization. At this time both Lymington and Sanderson were keen to keep the Mistery's finances on track, and the latter had expressed concern over a downward spiral in income earlier that year.<sup>312</sup>

As Sanderson and Lymington were the two highest ranking members in the group, they sat closest to a makeshift throne at the front of the hall opposite the entrance. It was important that no member was level with the king, to signal the service necessary to and the supremacy of the monarch. Sanderson had defined his own role as chancellor as having to perform the essential service of personally ruling the Mistery.<sup>313</sup> The 'service' spoken of here was both to the monarch and to the English race. Indeed, Sanderson devoted his role to see that 'all energy is directed' to developing the 'culture of the English race.'<sup>314</sup> Lymington's role as High Steward also involved the Deputy Chancellorship. His role included general management much like Sanderson but was also to be a shining example of the values of the Mistery. The position was described by Sanderson as revolving around being a 'principal exponent' of the values of the Mistery, and Lymington was expected to serve the interests of the English race much like Sanderson.<sup>315</sup>

The hall of the meeting was called a court and the seating was strictly set out. One rung down from Sanderson and Lymington were other high-ranking members of the organisations, at all-member meetings such as the Hurstbourne camp these included local kin leaders titled 'Chief Misters'. Chief Misters in attendance at this camp included Tom Nesbit, the leader of the Broomhill kin, Captain Mansfield of the Maidstone kin, the Steward of the Kent kin Bryant Irvine, and the local mister leader who worked closely with Lymington. Tom Nesbit was an original member who was enticed into the group by Sanderson, but come the split in the group, continued with Lymington through to the English Array. Founding member Bryant Irvine too eventually turned from Sanderson's favor and joined Lymington's later political activities.

The next level down the court contained senior members of the Mistery known as 'companions'. Among these men were Anthony Ludovici and Charles Challen, who were to be long term friends, and Henry Snell. We have already been introduced to Ludovici. Challen, though, had fought in the Great War, was a practicing Barrister

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<sup>312</sup> Sanderson to Lymington, 23 June 1934, 15/M84/414/1/1.

<sup>313</sup>The English Mistery, 'The Order of 1930 No.1 (London) 15M84/F396.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> The English Mistery, 'The Order of 1930 No.1 (London) 15M84/F396 p.4.

and, in 1941, was elected Conservative M. P. for Hampstead, holding the seat for nine years. Snell, alternatively, was a member of the Labour party and in 1931 obtained a place in the House of Lords.

At the back of the court and furthest away from the throne was a mix of roles. There stood the recorder of the English Mistery, at this time a Mr. Wilson. This was an important role and carried considerable weight within the group. The recorder was expected to maintain the discipline of the Mistery's members.<sup>316</sup> Geoffrey Wilson was a Conservative member, a friend of Lymington by the mid-1930s and in 1950 was elected Conservative M. P. for Truro, holding the seat for twenty years. At Hurstbourne a Colonel H. Holderness stood next to the recorder, and he was not yet initiated into the English Mistery. Holderness was an accomplished and respected military man and was recognized by the king himself for military achievements ten years earlier.<sup>317</sup> To the other side of the recorder stood the only associate in attendance at the Hurstbourne camp Mr. J. Harding, of whom little is known. The associate was an entry level role in the Mistery and the duty of those who adopted it were tasked with listening to and serving their seniors. They were dimly viewed by higher ranking members, including Lymington. In a letter to all Stewards Lymington characterized the associate as 'a man who knows about the Mistery, and will assist when he is able, but who is incapable of initiative and leadership and will never become a kinsman.'<sup>318</sup> This is a clear indication of the Mistery's fixation with leadership, that only a certain portion of society was capable of it and that if one was not capable of it only a future of servitude remained. The function of each role was to serve the rank above them, the king, and the English race. Depending on the role, be it treasurer or recorder, there were formal duties that related to the administration of the organization.

The Hurstbourne camp saw more negative and revealing discussion than the seemingly benign rearing of livestock, illuminating some internal onset issues within the organization. The state of progression of the Mistery towards its goals and the expansion of its membership caused men such as Geoffrey Wilson concern. Wilson took to the court to address a 'failure of recruiting', which was leading to a perceived downturn in the progression of the Mistery's objectives.<sup>319</sup> Being forthright in his criticisms, Wilson openly stated it was the Chancellor's responsibility to 'foster sufficient growth' but that the growth of the Mistery was worrying.<sup>320</sup> Wilson's concerns primarily focused on a lack of immediate action amongst members. He was directly quoted by the recorder of the meeting in saying some of leadership and members had the incorrect mentality about the Mistery, that it was not

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<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> *The London Gazette*, 22 February 1924.

<sup>318</sup> The English Mistery, 'Letter to all Stewards', undated memorandum, 15M84/415/6/1, p.1.

<sup>319</sup> The English Mistery, Notes 'The Third Assembly of the Hurstbourne Park Camp', 15M84/414/2/11.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.



an immediacy but ‘would happen sometime in the future.’<sup>321</sup> On this note, while Michael Beaumont and Reginald Dorman Smith became members of the English Mistery and lasting friends with Lymington, they both rescinded their participation in the group due to a perceived lack of action. This shall be picked up again shortly, for while the Mistery’s domestic activities consisted of regional meetings and cross-county camps, a select few members did travel abroad.

In Ludovici’s posthumously published autobiography, it was revealed that he, Lymington and Sanderson undertook multiple trips to Nazi Germany. Ludovici wrote of the foreign interest in the Mistery.

‘The movement certainly attracted the attention of many of the foreign diplomats in London. Thus I met Signor Grandi, with whom I often had talks. I cannot say that he impressed me very favorably; nor could I help being astonished to discover that Mussolini’s chief emissary in England could hardly express himself coherently in English. Our dinners were also frequently attended by members of the German Embassy Staff, as well as by the representatives of many political parties in France, Holland and Sweden, all of whom wished to learn something about our aims and outlook.’<sup>322</sup>

On 1 March 1936 Ludovici’s and Mistery representatives, including Sanderson, arrived in Berlin. They were given a ‘kind and considerate young Foreign Office official’ as a guide and ‘taken to all important meetings and driven round the country to inspect the various camps, training centers and institutions’.<sup>323</sup> On this particular visit, Ludovici recalled that they were ‘able to hear Hitler speak several times, and were always given such privileged seats at his meetings that we were able to get a close view of him and all his leading colleagues in the government.’<sup>324</sup> Ludovici also noted that as Sanderson could speak no German and was partially blind, Ludovici had to inform him of the goings-on. Nazi officials present that met the Mistery representatives were Goebbels, Himmler, Schirach Hess, Funk, Ribbentrop and Goering. Ludovici does remark that all these men, to him, struck as ‘commonplace, if not actually common.’<sup>325</sup> Ludovici informed the Nazi officials most resistance to their movement came from English women, and that the press were intent on spreading ‘falsehoods’ about Hitler.

Ludovici wrote of his and the Mistery’s interactions with Hitler, most of which came in the form of public speeches or dinners, but he did record his thoughts on the Nazi leader. He wrote that he ‘must have heard Hitler

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ludovici, *Confessions of An Anti-Feminist*, pp.104-110.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid., p.108.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

speak in public about a dozen times, but I met him to talk to only once.<sup>326</sup> Ludovici came away from his interactions through the Mistery with Hitler with only positive reflections, seen in the following quote.

‘One was easily carried away by the amazing eloquence, sincerity and passion of his public utterances, and no one who has heard him and who was capable of understanding what he said could fail to appreciate the reason of his irresistible appeal to all classes of the community.’<sup>327</sup>

Evidently, the Mistery attracted interest from several continental political actors and had some level of interaction with the Nazi party. It is known, for example, that Lymington had contacts in Germany which he pursued outside of the English Mistery. The organization itself, too, clearly did not keep its representation to a domestic sphere, even if the trips abroad were the purview of a few select members.

#### The split in the English Mistery and formation of the English Array

There were political and personal differences at play in the splitting of the English Mistery. Sanderson was a difficult character and rubbed several members up the wrong way. Charles Petrie, another young Conservative M. P., attended a Mistery meeting and later noted how Sanderson was a distasteful character whose political ideals were not compatible with Petrie’s.<sup>328</sup> Ludovici also had concerns with Sanderson; these were not strictly personal but did stem from Ludovici’s concern over a lack of activity and thus extended to Sanderson’s leadership. Ludovici made his concerns public to the group and Lymington, he thought Sanderson was leading the group into a ‘farce’ and being nothing more than an ‘insignificant branch of the Conservative party’.<sup>329</sup> Ludovici’s doubt in Sanderson’s competence was reflected in his later life, when in his autobiography he recalled Sanderson as the ‘so-called’ leader of the English Mistery.<sup>330</sup> Bryant Irvine, future M. P. and speaker of the House of Commons, wrote to Lymington to point out that the constant ‘contention’ between prominent members of the group was both dangerous and pointless.<sup>331</sup> Geoffrey Wilson’s concerns, which he outlined at the Hurstbourne camp, were not the only gripes members felt toward Sanderson’s leadership. The most important disagreement in the group however was between Sanderson and Lymington, and did not especially regard his leadership qualities, although that certainly exacerbated the situation. It was in fact Lymington’s personal life that led to disgruntlement in the

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<sup>326</sup> Ibid., pp.110-111.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid., p.111.

<sup>328</sup> Find discussions on Charles Petrie in; Bernhard Dietz, *Neo Tories: The Revolt of British Conservatives against Democracy and Political Modernity (1929-1939)* Trans. Ian Copestake, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012) pp.110-115.

<sup>329</sup> Anthony Ludovici, *Recovery*, p.10-11.

<sup>330</sup> Ludovici, *Confessions of an Anti-Feminist*, p.108.

<sup>331</sup> Bryant Irvine to Lymington, 26 March 1936, 15M84/F390.

organization so deep reconciliation was impossible and the result was a schism and the formation of the English Array. The disagreements between Lymington and Sanderson shall now be traced through their correspondence with each other.

On top of the previous problems in the organization mentioned above, Lymington's personal life was a controversial topic in the Mistery. From 1920, Lymington had been married to a Mary Lawrence Post, otherwise known as Viscountess Lymington. After having two children, it was in July 1935 that Lymington allegedly started his extra marital affair with a Miss Bridget Crohan, and divorce proceedings soon began. News of the divorce broke officially on 21 January 1936.<sup>332</sup> The reports contained small details of the affair, that the custody of the two children was to be given to the Viscountess and that she shall be paid a compensatory sum.

This caused a flurry of anger and controversy in the deeply socially conservative English Mistery. Once the initial storm of reaction had settled, Sanderson made his position known to Lymington. In February 1936 Sanderson stated his plan to organize a meeting to deal with the 'howling attack' that had arisen because of Lymington's decision making. Sanderson mentioned he had also come under attack for his close relationship with Lymington, and that there was dissatisfaction at Lymington's continued funding of the English Mistery. The mood of the organization was described as 'furious', but Sanderson clarified 'it is not what you have done that has caused the excitement but the way you have done it.'<sup>333</sup> Lymington was abroad at this time, but Sanderson remained active and received confirmation from Lymington on their strategy. Consequently, Sanderson sent another letter out to the senior members of the English Mistery stating that both men would offer their resignations and if accepted by the senior members, they would exit the group.<sup>334</sup> Sanderson also publicly expresses some support for Lymington, stating 'he was the only member of the aristocracy willing five years ago to make the necessary effort and to perform some of the duties neglected by the whole of the classes.'<sup>335</sup> Sanderson even offers his own resignation in the place of Lymington's, because this would certainly lead to the downfall of the organization. This was because there was no adequate replacement, and it would 'double the difficulties and halve the resources' of the Mistery.<sup>336</sup> This public expression of solidarity was not mirrored in Sanderson's personal correspondence with Lymington.

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<sup>332</sup> *The Times*, 21 January 1936, p.5.

<sup>333</sup> Sanderson to Lymington, 10 February 1936, 15M84/F390/16.

<sup>334</sup> Sanderson to English Mistery Members, 19<sup>th</sup> February 1936, 15M84/F390/66/1.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

Sanderson was in fact deeply troubled with Lymington's actions. He in no uncertain terms made his loss of trust in Lymington known to him, writing he had 'again and again' broken his word, and that his hereditary position was now all but forfeited.<sup>337</sup> Sanderson clearly felt at this point the pressure on him to act was becoming overwhelming, writing to Lymington that he was in a terrible position and that he was convinced his resignation will be accepted if Lymington could not somehow placate the situation.<sup>338</sup> Doubtful of Lymington's ability to stabilize the situation, Sanderson expressed doubts about a positive outcome to another Mystery member.<sup>339</sup> Sanderson's precarity turned into accusations of conspiracy against Lymington, implying the latter had deliberately acted as he did to undermine him. He wrote that he thought Lymington had gone out of his way to break Sanderson, despite him knowing Sanderson must 'stand or fall' according to Lymington's conduct.<sup>340</sup> This is also indicative of the importance of Lymington not only to the Mystery but to Sanderson's standing as well, for Lymington had brought a gloss to the former freemason as well as monetary and intellectual backing. It seems Lymington's approach initially to this situation was to sit back and see how events unfolded. Sanderson, on the other hand, became increasingly concerned.

On 26 February 1936 the meeting Sanderson convened to discuss the issue occurred. The meeting was described as a 'storm', going back and forth and grave disagreements and antagonism. The Gloucestershire Kin refused to recognize Lymington in any capacity, but no consensus was reached on his resignation due to the vociferous manner of the debate.<sup>341</sup> As for Sanderson, he too came under fire despite chairing the meeting. Sanderson and Ludovici were accused of 'ratting' because they maintained relationships with Lymington and offered public recognition, if not support, for his services.<sup>342</sup> Sanderson is recorded as retaliating to this by asking how those services would be replaced should Lymington be expelled, and no answer was offered. The meeting ended inconclusively, and the only productive element to be gleaned was the borders had now been drawn between members.

Sanderson and Lymington's resignations hung in the balance until early April when Sanderson completely lost patience with Lymington. From the letters that were exchanged, the contents of their personal and written communication can be understood, as both men after meeting in person clarified their positions in letters. Sanderson stated this was to ensure 'no mistakes can occur hereafter', while Lymington seemed reticent to do so.

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<sup>337</sup> Sanderson to Lymington, 19 February 1936, 15M84/F390/6.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Sanderson to Cornwallis, 22 February 1936, 15M84/F390/9/1.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Sanderson to Lymington, 27 February 1936, 15M84F390/49.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> This was because in his eyes the situation was difficult to view objectively, largely down to his personal involvement and his long friendship with Sanderson.<sup>344</sup> From these conversations three main points were made.

The first was Lymington's fundamental demand that Sanderson withdraw from active administration in the Mistery, that he reduce his personal involvement in members lives and retire to producing pamphlets in the organizations' London office.<sup>345</sup> Aside from Lymington's obvious personal motivations for this request, he cited Ludovici as one member who had had by this point well enough with Sanderson. The latter rebuked this by stating he had himself garnered some support from members and that they thought his exit was 'the last thing they wanted in the world.'<sup>346</sup> Evidently, both men felt they had considerable support from their respective peers.

The second point important to be drawn from the discussion was Sanderson's plea that Lymington gave his 'definite and binding assurance' that his plan to unify the Mistery did not consist in just removing Sanderson and his allies. Again, we see Sanderson's recognition of his own precarity. Despite Sanderson stating elsewhere he had gambled everything on Lymington, his suspicions continued to grow. Lymington's response was that he had no intention of ousting anyone. The instability in the Mistery had grown an atmosphere of suspected usurpation, especially in its upper echelons. Arthur Bryant, who was operating in several circles in and around the Conservative party at the time, had informed Sanderson three times he did not think many members of the Mistery actually grasped its values or traditions.<sup>347</sup> This leads us to the third and fundamental point of Lymington and Sanderson's talks: the personal disputes between Mistery members, while not confined to the two men, had been exacerbated by their problems and particularly the conundrum Lymington's actions had caused Sanderson. The Mistery was not only invested in Lymington on a personal and political level, but they had for several years espoused values of 'discipline', 'faith', 'tradition', and 'self-control'.<sup>348</sup> Thus, Lymington's infidelity had caused the Mistery a problem which Sanderson could not solve. Sanderson had been put in a difficult position, for he knew that Lymington was a boon for the organization and yet was under pressure from the membership to adhere to the values he himself had written into the constitution. Elsewhere, irreconcilable personal differences continued between Sanderson's close friend Tim Wilson and Ludovici, as well as Arthur Bryant and Challen, who refused

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<sup>343</sup> Sanderson to Lymington, 1 April 1936, 15M84/F390/24/1.

<sup>344</sup> Lymington to Sanderson, 2 April 1936, 15M84/F390/22/1.

<sup>345</sup> Sanderson to Lymington, 1 April 1936, 15M84/F390/24/2 and Lymington to Sanderson, 2 April 1936, 15M84/F390/22/1.

<sup>346</sup> Sanderson to Lymington, 1 April 1936, 15M84/F390/24/1.

<sup>347</sup> Bernhard Dietz, *Neo-Tories*, p.26., Sanderson to Lymington, 1 April 1936, 15M84/F390/24/2.

<sup>348</sup> The English Mistery, 'Orders of 1930 No.2' (London: The English Mistery, 1930) p.2., The English Mistery, 'Orders of 1930 No.7', (London: English Mistery, 1930) p.2., The English Mistery, 'Orders of 1931 No.5' (London: English Mistery, 1931) p.21.

to work with each other.<sup>349</sup> The combined pressures of the Lymington dilemma and these personal antagonisms had frustrated and confounded Sanderson, and eventually this frustration was directed towards Lymington.

The demands made on Sanderson by Lymington sent him over the edge. Sanderson accused Lymington of showing a fundamentally damaging ‘lack of appreciation’ for what he had done for the group.<sup>350</sup> Lymington responded tersely, stating he had not understood Sanderson’s attitude or thinking at all, and that he was the one acting irrationally.<sup>351</sup> Lymington’s expectations of the Mistery and of Sanderson had shrunk throughout the debacle, and by this point he had set his sights on new projects. Thus, on the first day of June 1936, the English Mistery accepted the resignation of Lymington.<sup>352</sup> Sanderson wrote there was to be no replacement, and was both deflated and without a plan, asking members to contribute any ideas on how they should proceed.<sup>353</sup> Anthony Ludovici and Arthur Bryant both followed Lymington out of the Mistery, along with other senior members such as Sir Geoffrey Congreve and Richard de Grey. Where they followed Lymington was to the English Array, formed by Lymington as his and his own. In 1937, the *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array* was created. It celebrated the split and informed its new readership the ‘suckers had been removed’ from their movement, the mission of the which importantly remained the same.<sup>354</sup> While many of the ideas and values Lymington garnered from his time in the Mistery remained, the Array was to be a more explicitly political and avidly pro-Nazi group that had no choice to react to the increasing geo-political tensions of the late 1930s. This is where attention shall now be directed.

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<sup>349</sup> Sanderson to Lymington, 1 April 1936, 15M84/F390/24/2.

<sup>350</sup> Sanderson to Lymington, 4 April 1936, 15M84/F390/28.

<sup>351</sup> Lymington to Sanderson, 9 April 1936, 15M84/F390/17.

<sup>352</sup> Sanderson to The Stewards of The English Mistery, 4 June 1936, 15M84/F390/1/1.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid.

<sup>354</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, September 1937, p.2.

## The English Array

Viscount Lymington's English Array had as its office Farleigh Wallop, Lymington's grand Hampshire estate. It recorded its purpose as the same as the English Mistery's, stating the 'purpose of the Array does not differ in any way from that contemplated by the founders of our organisations seven years ago.'<sup>355</sup> It retained the feudalistic and military coloring of the Mistery, openly stating it drew inspiration not only for its name but its character from the archers at the battle of Agincourt in 1415.<sup>356</sup> The Array set as its founding date the year 1930, the year the Mistery was founded, and later measured itself across the eight year period, including the time it was known as the English Mistery, thus indicating Lymington conceived of it as a reformed organization, not a brand new one.<sup>357</sup> Indeed, it seems that the decision by Lymington to choose a new name was partly a symbolic act of 'cleansing' the group, but also because of the threatened legal battles by their former comrades over the name 'English Mistery'.<sup>358</sup>

The group advocated for a resistance to 'attacks on our national strength' and for 'loyal service to the King and the Country', to ensure the 'survival of the best types of Englishmen' and the preservation of the 'identity of the nation'.<sup>359</sup> The Array's vision of governance was to 'restore a real system of government through the renunciation of democratic principles and the re-establishment of Aristocracy and personal leadership'.<sup>360</sup> It was not Lymington's intention to lead in this prospective government, however. In a letter to the new members, he explicitly stated 'I cannot be a dictator or create opportunities for you'.<sup>361</sup>

The Array has been understood as having 'Gothic medieval connotations', 'rural nostalgic and organicist ideas' and a 'Pro-Hitler' outlook.<sup>362</sup> It consistently styled itself on a mythic English past, drawing from medieval terminology and symbolism, which they connected to an imagined past in which the contemporary 'racial degeneration' people like Ludovici spoke of had not occurred. A prime example of 'palingenesis'. Martin Pugh painted the group as 'a boy scout troop as much as political party', having a need for 'selective breeding and racial purity', and that it had 'many ideas in common with other fascist organizations'.<sup>363</sup> Elsewhere, Dan Stone stated

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<sup>355</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, September 1938, p.3.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>357</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, January 1939, p.1.

<sup>358</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, September 1937, pp.1-2.

<sup>359</sup> The English Array, 'The Order of the Working of the English Array' (London: The English Array, 1937).

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>361</sup> The English Array, 'Circular of 1937 No.1' (London: The English Array, 1937).

<sup>362</sup> Martin Pugh, 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts': *Fascists and Fascism in Britain in Between the Wars* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005) pp.140-142.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*, p.72.

it was in fact Lymington's own ideology that manifested in the ideas of the English Array,<sup>364</sup> and Bernhard Dietz noted it was so Anglo-centric it 'cared only about England'.<sup>365</sup> Indeed, it was strongly reminiscent of the English Mystery's espousals and Lymington's own developing politics, a racialized aristocratic and rural revival. This was reflected in the requirements of prospective members of the Array.

To be a member of the Array a racial quality had to be demonstrated. Membership required the candidate to be 'physically sound and of the English types and stocks bred within the four seas'.<sup>366</sup> They were also required to vouch that their ancestors had been of such stock since the 1870s. Other 'British races' were admissible, but they were required to adhere to 'English traditions'.<sup>367</sup> Indeed, if we look at the document with which memberships, many of the values expected of members can be revealed along with its' political character.

'I have faith in the surviving stock of my own people. I have love for them and for the English soil from which they have sprung. I have hope that through the regeneration of that stock and of its soil. I hate the system of democracy which is in effect a tyranny that dupes men by allowing them to agitate in Hyde Park while it refuses them the right to be responsible for their own family.'<sup>368</sup>

Its own 'objects' detail its aims to 'unite all Englishmen able and willing to resist attacks on our national strength and the welfare of our people by factions and individual interests and in return for protection from such attack render a loyal service to the king and country.'<sup>369</sup> The Array's members were tasked with 'the survival of best types of Englishmen', preserving 'the identity of the nation through a gradual process of change' and restoring 'sound tradition as the foundation of government'.<sup>370</sup> This was alongside a renunciation of democracy in favor of aristocracy, which was also a key idea in the constitution of the Mystery. Fundamentally, the men of the English Array were tasked with two essential purposes, to ensure the 'best types of Englishmen' and to 'preserve the identity of the nation'.<sup>371</sup> Indeed, its 'patriotism' was exemplified in their insignia, a red rose and the St George's flag, indicating their distinct, reactionary, Englishness.

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<sup>364</sup> Dan Stone, 'The Far Right and the Back-to-the-Land Movement' in V. Gottlieb, Julie and Linehan, Thomas (eds) *The Culture of Fascism: Visions of the Far Right in Britain* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004) pp.183-189.

<sup>365</sup> Dietz, *Neo-Tories*, p.110.

<sup>366</sup> The English Array, 'The Order of the Working of the English Array' (London: The English Array, 1937).

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Undated Memorandum, 15M84F178/F179.

<sup>369</sup> The English Array, 'The Order of the Working of the English Array' (London: The English Array, 1937).

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.



Clearly, the ideological inspirations of the Array lay in Lymington's own conceptions, which had been in turn deeply affected by the English Mistery. As such, the political ideology of the Array shall not be subject to any further deep exposition. Instead, the structure and activities of the group shall be outlined, followed by the Array's views on Europe, against which its political positions were often defined, giving the group both a place in the growing far-right appeasement movement of the middle and later years of the 1930s and a distinct pro-Hitler outlook. The Array's attitude towards the war was given particular interest by Lymington and in turn he created the British Council Against European Commitments, which will be approached in the next chapter.

#### Structure and Activities of the English Array

Lymington chose to retain the spinal structure of the Mistery and for the most part simply renamed its components. The senior officials of the group were renamed from the Council of Strength to the Keepers of the Array, the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor to Warden and Vice-Warden, High Steward and Area Steward to Marshal and Area Marshal. There were then the regional changes, wherein local groups were renamed musters, Chief Mister to Lieutenant or Reeve, Recorder to Clerk, Mister of Ceremonies to Ensign, Charter to Commission, Companion to Yeoman and Associates to Men of the Array.

Early changes to positions included Richard de Grey, former prominent Mistery member, being appointed to a 'King Alfred Muster' in Dorset. Another former Mistery man was Donald Ratcliffe, who became marshal of North Staffordshire and Geoffrey Congreve, by this point a friend of Lymington's, was appointed the area Marshal for the whole of Staffordshire. F. J. Hunt, a man who appears to have resided in Farleigh Wallop and therefore was near Lymington, was appointed clerk, and Bryant Irvine was charged with the role of Warden of the Array.<sup>372</sup> The Array seems to have taken the most prominent names from the Mistery. Anthony Ludovici remained a primary ideologue in the group alongside Lymington, and popular Conservative officials like Reginald Dorman Smith and Michael Beaumont still attended meetings.<sup>373</sup>

The activities of the English Array stayed largely in the lane of the Mistery. They held dinners, weekend camps, lectures, and readings, as well as encouraging the local initiative of regional members. There were also agricultural experiments carried out by Lymington and the Basingstoke muster at Farleigh Wallop. One such event occurred in December 1937. It was recorded that the group sought an experiment which 'should go far towards deciding whether organic methods of soil conservation have the merits which are claimed for them and whether methods

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<sup>372</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of The English Array*, September 1937, pp.1-3.

<sup>373</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, September 1938.

based on ancient wisdom were not after all in the best interests of the race.<sup>374</sup> This essentially comprised of comparing the growth rates and quality of ‘healthy soil full of humus’ to ‘soil stimulated by artificial manure.’<sup>375</sup> In West England, one member had taken the individual initiative so craved by the Array and ‘proved capable in getting his employer in a factory to alter positions of machines so that workmen and women could stand or sit at their work in the most healthy and natural position.’<sup>376</sup> In Hampshire Array members set about revitalizing a sizeable bed of watercress, increasing its quality to a sellable standard. Moreover, by petitioning local state schools, the Array managed to get the work of Sir Robert Mccarrison distributed throughout the local curriculum. Mccarrison, whose thought Lymington perceived as ‘in line’ with his, had been appointed Honorable Physician to the King and was a noted nutritionist.<sup>377</sup> In London, the Array had acted on its militaristic dispositions and celebration of empire by setting up communications with returning British soldiers from imperial provinces such as India. At this point, Lymington was positive about the Array’s progress. He noted the group was showing signs of ‘vigor’ and that in Staffordshire over twenty men had signed up.<sup>378</sup> He also noted that he had attended public ceremonies in which the espousals of unnamed public speakers had mirrored those of the Array, and Lymington took this as evidence of ‘how widely Array doctrine is spreading’.<sup>379</sup>

English Array dinners were held in April and in September 1938 there was a weekend camp, to which all members and officials were invited. The camp involved speeches from a Dr Arbour Stephens on industrial diseases, Rolf Gardiner spoke on the early national work camps in Germany, as well as the usefulness of ‘youth camps’, and then Reginald Dorman Smith spoke about the state of the National Farmers Union and farming across the empire generally.<sup>380</sup> There were initiations of new yeoman, working parties on the uses of chalk, fencing, weed cutting, and the building and turning of compost heaps. Ludovici gave an extensive talk on the rise of liberalism, and the regional officers were called to report on the years activities and administrative changes. Lymington organized executives like himself to be interviewed by members, and the camp would be concluded by songs and danced led by the Morris dancing Rolf Gardiner.<sup>381</sup> Updates on activities further afield involved a conflict between the Gittisham Muster, Devon, and the local schools. The Array outpost had sought to keep village schools open to aid in the restoration of a ‘rural education’ in line with ‘Array values’. Lymington recorded the quest had likely failed

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, December 1937, pp.1-4.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>380</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, October 1938, pp.2-5.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

because the 'centralized soviets which run our education will not respond to sense' but was praiseful of the parental support the Array received.<sup>382</sup>

Numerically the largest the English Array become could have been no more than 200 members, however it did stretch across quite considerable distances over Britain, from Basingstoke to Wales to Hull.<sup>383</sup> Geographically the largest it became was in April 1939. Areas listed as homes to Array musters were Devon, Dorset, Essex, Hampshire, Hull, Northumberland, Norfolk, and Carmarthen, Wales.<sup>384</sup> The Array was eventually wound up, and Lymington in early 1939 was not happy with the progress the organization has made. He wrote to his members through the *Quarterly Gazette*.

'At eight years end, we are no more than a small body, scattered in a handful of musters across England, and to the outward eye with little to show for the painful effort expended.'<sup>385</sup>

Lymington was disappointed with the progress of the Array, and it did not achieve the same stature as the British Union of Fascists. It did, however, configure a mixed attitude toward the domestic fascism of the BUF. The Array found several aspects of BUF worthy of compliments. One such aspect was their anti-democracy, specifically their view that Liberal Democracy was enabling the corrupting force of the 'international financier.'<sup>386</sup> The Italian Corporatism the BUF adopted was another aspect Lymington and the Array found appealing, for it seemed to have much in common with the mythic medieval guild system the Array proposed. There was then the ideal of eradicating class conflict, but retaining class structure, through a transcendent 'service' to the nation and race, again a view both groups held.<sup>387</sup> The corporatist plan to appoint representatives of workers and private business was a staple of both fascist Italy and Nazi Germany's economic planning, and thus as the BUF also proposed this the Array presumed them to be working in the best 'national interest'.<sup>388</sup> However, the Array did have some issues with BUF policy. The corporatist project to appoint representatives, ran the risk in Lymington's mind of rehashing the voting elements of Liberal Democracy. This led into further critique from the Array on BUF policy regarding the House of Commons. The Array wished for the commons to be reduced to an ameliorated advisory body,

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<sup>382</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>383</sup> Warden's Report for Presentation to the Keepers of the English Array, April 1939, 15M84/F179/13, pp.1-4.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>385</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, January 1939, p.1.

<sup>386</sup> Lymington, 'The English Array and the British Union of Fascists', 1938, 15M84/F366/3, p.1.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

whereas the BUF had not by this point made their position known.<sup>389</sup> Indeed, the following excerpt from a document authored by Lymington presents the attitude of the Array toward the BUF in full.

‘there is much in the policy of the British Union, which must commend itself to the men of the Array...to restore the guild or corporation system in industry; to encourage the revival of artisan crafts; to rebuild agriculture’ to insist on the restoration of the doctrine of individual responsibility; to endeavor to raise the health of nation by...insisting on better working conditions and...preventing the perpetuation of sickly stock; to put an end to the use of this country as the racial cesspit of Europe and the near east; and finally to restore as the touchstone of national policy the welfare of the entire body politic rather than the selfish interests of its individual members, in short the aristocratic doctrine of service and duty instead of the doctrine of rights.’<sup>390</sup>

The health of a racial stock and aristocratic and economic revival were praised, unsurprisingly so given the driving logic of race in both organisations. Indeed, if Mosley’s own propaganda is included, he too fetishized a racial stock that can flourish in purity should the forces of corruption be addressed.<sup>391</sup> Another revealing similarity is Mosley’s sentiments on class and service. There would be ‘no reward without service’, and ‘functional differences will exist according to difference of function.’<sup>392</sup> Strikingly similar to the Array and Lymington’s fixation with service and a natural difference in each person’s capacity for service, this is another point of similarity.

Where the most explicit disagreements arise is concerning policy on the House of Lords and the Monarchy. The BUF policy was officially to retain it and enforce loyalty to it. Mosley expressed these sentiments, stating the BUF had ‘absolute Loyalty to the Crown’ and that they would ‘in every way maintain its dignity’.<sup>393</sup> This was not good enough for a strongly royalist English Array. This was a position ‘which no member of the Array could for one moment adhere to’.<sup>394</sup> Demanding a restoration and appropriate expansion of monarchic authority, the Array’s position was ‘it is absolutely essential that the King’s power should be full restored so that he can fulfil the true traditions of royalism by ruling and protecting his people in return for service’.<sup>395</sup> Lymington had written essays previously on English Royalism and its centrality to his political vision. He understood the Monarchy as essential to the work of national reconstruction.<sup>396</sup> Lymington was particularly skeptical of the potential of a Mosley

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid., pp.2-3.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>391</sup> Oswald Mosley, *Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered* (London: Sanctuary Press ltd, 2019) p.7.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>394</sup> Lymington, ‘The English Array and the British Union of Fascists’, p.1, Undated Memorandum, p.3, 15M84/F366/3.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Lymington, ‘Essay on English Royalism’, 15M84/F366.

dictatorship should the BUF be successful in their march for power. In his eyes, this would override and consequently degrade the authority of the King. Lymington thought that the BUF failed to acknowledge ‘that the complimentary power in the sovereign to protect in return for service rendered must be restored.’<sup>397</sup> Fundamentally, the BUF had shown a ‘notable failure to appreciate the traditions behind not merely English but all royalism.’<sup>398</sup> This was connected to another aspect of the sympathetic skepticism Lymington held toward the BUF. Heredity of wealth and blood was a keystone of Lymington and the Array’s outlook, and their royalism and aristocratic fervor were contingent upon this belief. While the Array complimented the BUF policy on racial heredity, land and wealth-based heredity was not such a central feature, although it can be said the BUF had absolutely no intention to overturn private property or attack its philosophic roots. Lymington lamented the fact that the BUF did not have a focus on heredity as stringent as his. This led to the BUF’s vague policy on the House of Lords being placed under Lymington’s scrutiny. The latter believed the ‘only sane reform of the House of Lords is that which would turn it once again into an aristocratic as opposed to autocratic chamber.’<sup>399</sup> To further reveal the attitude the Array and Lymington had towards fascism and its ideals, their attitude towards its continental variations in their contemporary context shall now be traced.

#### The English Array and Europe

The Array operated in a period of political tension and geopolitical division. The ‘Age of Catastrophe’, as Hobsbawm called it, both housed and formed the group.<sup>400</sup> Despite aspiring to avoid commentary on foreign affairs, which they saw as ‘outside’ their consideration, they could not help but be drawn into affairs that related to their patriotism or British foreign relations.<sup>401</sup> Lymington remained skeptical over his members capacity to comment on these overseas developments, questioning their knowledge on the subjects, and kept authorship on the issues at hand to himself, Ludovici and a couple of other senior members. The affairs that the Array commented on were unsurprisingly the authoritarian, fascist and Nazi movements of Portugal, Italy, Spain, and Germany. The affairs of these regimes gave them opportunity to further their anti-democracy, develop an interesting relationship with the policies of fascist states and, perhaps most importantly for the analysis at hand, detail Lymington’s complex pro-Nazi attitude. Feeling compelled to comment on the events leading to and in the outcome of Germany’s annexation of Austria, the *Anschluss*, Lymington recorded in the *Gazette* a revealing approach.

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<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> Lymington, ‘The English Array and the British Union of Fascists’, Undated Memorandum, 15M84/F366/3.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>400</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: 1914-1991* (London: Little Brown Book Group, 2020) pp.8-12.

<sup>401</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, April 1938, p.5-6.

Following the annexation of Austria to German control in March 1938, the *Array's Quarterly Gazette* suggested the Austrian people had sought Nazism as a form of resistance to a 'reign of terror supported by the international money lender and former allies of the war.'<sup>402</sup> The latter suggests Lymington had a skepticism of Britain's involvement in European affairs, and that they were impeding Austrian enthusiasm for Nazism. Indeed, if we briefly examine the events that led to the annexation, the opportunity for its completion was enacted after Ribbentrop had a conversation with the newly appointed foreign secretary, Lord Halifax. The Nazis were informed after this conversation 'Britain will do nothing in regard to Austria.'<sup>403</sup> This was a key moment in the events leading to the *Anschluss*, for as Frank McDonagh described, in much of the 1930s Britain frequently interfered in European affairs and was consistently seen as a threatening presence.<sup>404</sup> Lymington wrote also of this involvement, but the angle he took was one of opposition to the impeding of Nazism, rather than anti-foreign intervention.<sup>405</sup> This also informed his support of Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy. This was expressed in the *Quarterly Gazette*, where it was written that 'it is clear that the Prime Minister is bent on avoiding a useless war and on keeping reasonable and friendly relations with those powers such as Germany and Italy, with whom we might otherwise have been forced into war by reckless propaganda in press and parliament'.<sup>406</sup>

Lymington wrote of how the 'nearly desperate Nazi majority' of Austria was apparently being 'suppressed' by allied powers. Lymington stated the annexation should have occurred long ago, and that Germany had acted just in time to prevent a civil war.<sup>407</sup> This position is especially illuminating when compared to speeches heard in the House of Lords immediately after the event. The attitude toward Nazi interest in Austria within the British government had for long time been one of acceptance, that it was almost inevitable and that it was not something to intervene in, as it seemed it was generally welcomed by the Austrian populace. On 17 March 1938 Lord Halifax commented on the events, speaking of it as a 'shock to European confidence', and that the situation should not be interfered with by the League of Nations as 'only war could bring about a change in the situation'.<sup>408</sup>

The *Quarterly Gazette's* attitude differed from mainstream press outlets. The *Manchester Guardian* had reported on the events and stated that the only reason not a shot was fired in the annexation was because that was the choice

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> William Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960) p.423.

<sup>404</sup> Frank McDonough, *The Hitler Years, Volume 1: Triumph 1933-1939* (London: Head of Zeus, 2019) pp.350-353.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> *The Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, July 1938, p.2.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> *Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series.D. Vol.2, Germany and Czechoslovakia, 1937-1938* (Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1950), pp.171-3.

of the Austrian government, and that war was inevitable. It went on to inform its readers a year after the event ‘this, then, is Hitler’s policy, this is the naked fist.’<sup>409</sup> *The Times* was even more forthright, lamenting the capitulation of Austria and what it would mean for European affairs and British interests, describing the events as ‘The Rape of Austria.’<sup>410</sup> While diverting their analysis from mainstream press outlets, the *Quarterly Gazette*’s response is remarkably similar to that of the BUF press. In *Action* on 19 March 1938 one can find the following reaction to the *Anschluss*; ‘At this very hour millions of Austrians rejoice because Hitler has brought about their union in the new brotherhood of the German people’.<sup>411</sup> Much like the Array, the BUF press used Nazi success to further an anti-war and fundamentally pro-Nazi approach, they wrote of British politicians ‘using every effort to send you into the slaughter house of another European war’ and that ‘In Germany, in Italy, in Spain, in Austria, Communism has been crushed and at the same time Capital has been made the servant of the national will.’<sup>412</sup> From Lymington and the Array’s response to the *Anschluss*, we can see they and the BUF both diverted away from the establishment press in a pro-Nazi manner, moving them into a similar lane of pro-Nazi and far-right appeasement.

In Lymington’s own personal correspondence with fellow pro-Nazi organicist Rolf Gardiner there is further reaction to the *Anschluss*, as well as Nazi Germany. They celebrated Hitler’s expansion in Eastern Europe, that it could only be seen as a ‘historic sweep of destiny’.<sup>413</sup> There were also lamentations over British policy in Europe and the ‘condition into which England has degenerated since the end of the War.’<sup>414</sup> However, their pro-Nazism was not total or without reservation. Both Gardiner and Lymington bemoaned the technological modernism of Nazism, highlighting that to reach a point of regeneration, a (supposedly) anti-modernist position, they were employing modernist methods.<sup>415</sup> Gardiner informed Lymington of the solution Lymington had been endorsing for years – that the only way national revival was possible was through agricultural revival. This was the only way to ensure Britain would ‘once again be an effective force in the world.’<sup>416</sup> Nonetheless, Germany was praised, and the men agreed ‘the daring and swiftness and conviction of their deeds proclaim them at least men and not tottering old women.’<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>409</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 12 March 1939.

<sup>410</sup> *The Times*, 15 March 1938.

<sup>411</sup> *Action*, 19 March 1938.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> Rolf Gardiner to Lymington, 16 March 1938, 15M84/F195/9/ pp.1-4.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid.*

In April 1938, Lymington and the Array coordinated a response to events in Spain. Approaching General Franco's rise to power, their *Gazette* stated Franco's 'was not a military rebellion, but a popular uprising against great material odds to save Spain from a foreign planned Communist revolution.'<sup>418</sup> Lymington saw Franco in a particularly favorable light. Franco had the balance of 'decency and human behavior on his side'.<sup>419</sup> On the other hand, *The Times* had published a diverse range of reports on General Franco. In early March they had reported on the Spanish press becoming uneasy with the British government's lackluster approach to recognizing the nationalist government. *The Times* thus ran a report on 'Anti-British views in Franco Press'.<sup>420</sup> The Array did not show such concern. Recent scholarship on British approaches to Spain show a policy of strict neutrality and a patience as to see who emerged victorious in the Spanish conflicts.<sup>421</sup> Indeed, it has become clear that as soon as Franco obtained the upper hand in Spain, the British government's policy changed from strict neutrality to appeasement, to avoid threats to their interests and a European war. In 1938 Chamberlain's response had changed to active diplomacy with Franco, constructing a prisoner exchange program to mediate the conflict and Britain's place within it.<sup>422</sup> Undoubtedly, the Array's favorability of Spain was motivated largely by their anti-Communism. Interestingly, this was also the reason Hitler gave British delegates for Germany's intervention into Spain.<sup>423</sup>

Another European authoritarian movement discussed in the *Quarterly Gazette* was that of Salazar's Portugal. Similarly praiseful, the articles pertaining to Salazar go beyond praise for the sake of anti-Communism.. Once again, the mainstream press' treatment of Salazar's regime was condemned by Lymington. Writing in support of Salazar, Lymington praised him for restoring authority in Portugal and combatting 'liberal financial interests' which had brought down monarchic authority. Salazar's political journey was described as 'remarkable', and an example to all men of the Array. According to Lymington, the regime showcased how 'the work of national reconstruction can be carried out along traditional lines'.<sup>424</sup> The corporate system deployed in Portugal also received plaudits in the Array publication, for it supposedly freed the country from the whims of international finance. Further policies of land resettlement and funding for agriculture were praised. Salazar encouraged the public to move out of cities into rural areas, and this was seen positively. This, according to Lymington, also strengthened the family unit, and encouraged a productive social order when traditional family values were

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<sup>418</sup> *The Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, April 1938, pp.5-7.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>420</sup> *The Times*, 1 March 1938.

<sup>421</sup> Scott Ramsey, 'Ensuring Benevolent Neutrality: The British Government's appeasement of General Franco during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939', *The International History Review* Vol.41 No.3 (2019) pp.604-623.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid.*, p.617.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>424</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, January 1939 p.4.



observed.<sup>425</sup> Lymington, later in his life, praised the Hungarian dictator Horthy for similar reasons, citing he was the closest thing in Europe to an old-fashioned England landlord.<sup>426</sup>

What is most prevalent in the Array's approach to continental politics is their profound anti-communism. The Array frequently railed against communist 'hysteria' and their 'popular lies'.<sup>427</sup> There is also a clear focus on agricultural and public health policy abroad and at home which, as seen above, inflected on their broader political commentary. Indeed, articles were dedicated to an extensive rebuttal of the League of Nations' policy on imported foods, as well as a 1938 'National Fitness Campaign'.<sup>428</sup> There is, however, another element, and that is the avoidance of war and the policy of appeasement, which connected to their anti-communism. Lymington was explicit in his reasons for the avoidance of war. As well as the various praises and similar mobilizing passions to continental fascism and authoritarianism shown above, Lymington urged Array members to 'save our country from being forced into a war which would end white civilization'.<sup>429</sup> This introduced an explicitly civilizational view into Lymington's racial politics. To Lymington, whiteness was central to the West and a constitutive element in its identity, and the protection and regeneration of the white race central to politics. Scholars have been working on revealing 'whiteness' as an essentialist racial category-distinction in the Western imaginary.<sup>430</sup> Consequently, scholarship on British fascism is attempting to incorporate the importance of a co-constitutive notion of 'white West' to inter-war British fascists, and there can be no doubt that to Lymington, communism was seen as a threat to the white race.<sup>431</sup>

As the orient was constructed in opposition to the occident and white civilization, Lymington was by no means alone in amalgamating a monolithic threat of Jews and Communists, and more infrequently atheists, in defense of a white civilization.<sup>432</sup> Anthony Ludovici in his text *Defense of Aristocracy* also discussed threats to white

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<sup>425</sup> Ibid.

<sup>426</sup> Viscount Lymington, *A Knot of Roots* (1965) p.161.

<sup>427</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, January 1939 p.4.

<sup>428</sup> *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, December 1937, p.3; *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, April 1938, p.3.

<sup>429</sup> For examples see the following editions of Lymington's journalistic venture, *The New Pioneer*; *The New Pioneer*, June 1939, July 1939, August 1939.

<sup>430</sup> Gerald Horne, *The Dawning of the Apocalypse: The Roots of Slavery, White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism and Capitalism in the Long Sixteenth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020); Geraldine Heng, *The Invention of Race in the European Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>431</sup> For examples of the growing scholarship on the relationship between British imperialism and British fascism see; Liam J. Liburd, 'Beyond the Pale: Whiteness, Masculinity and Empire in the British Union of Fascists, 1932-1940', *Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, Vol.7 (2018) pp.275-296; Paul Stocker, *Lost Imperium: Far Right Visions of the British Empire* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2020).

<sup>432</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism*, pp.12-20; This was also prevalent in the BUF press, see; *Action*, 13 August 1936; *Action*, 28 August 1935; *Action*, 23 December 1937; *Action*, 19 December 1937; *Blackshirt*, 14 November 1936.

civilization, 'white slavery' and a failure of Europe to grasp and act upon a natural white superiority.<sup>433</sup> Removed from Lymington's milieu, the newly popularized economist Ludwig Von Mises can also be found praising Italian Fascism for saving 'European Civilization'.<sup>434</sup> Lymington was not alone in sympathizing with regimes that traded on white salvation.<sup>435</sup> From his own writings and those provided in the *Quarterly Gazette*, Lymington clearly perceived the fascist and authoritarian movements of Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria and Hungary as rebelling against these threats and opportunities to strike back against corrupting forces. Lymington endorsed explicitly fascist movements as opportunities for a counter-revolution brings to mind mainstream ideas of fascism as a counter revolution.<sup>436</sup> Writing of Italian fascism in particular, Losurdo wrote 'at issue was cancelling, or more or less drastically reducing, the concessions won from liberal society by the popular movement.'<sup>437</sup> Lymington found himself drawn to the acts of continental fascism because he perceived their responses being to the same threats he envisaged slowly destroying a mythical England so embedded in his mind. This led him to vehemently oppose the war and form oppositional stances to its possibility, and this colored all Lymington's movements in the late 1930s and he took this with him as he swiftly entered the field of British fascism.

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<sup>433</sup> Anthony Ludovici, *A Defense of Aristocracy* (London, 1915), pp.273-275.

<sup>434</sup> Ludwig von Mises, *Liberalism*, p.30.

<sup>435</sup> Dan Stone, *Responses to Nazism, 1933-1939* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Richard Griffiths, *What Did you Do During the War: The Last Throes of the British Pro-Nazi Right, 1940-1945* (London: Routledge, 2016).

<sup>436</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: 1914-1991* (London: Little Brown Book Group, 2020); Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter History* (London: Verso Books, 2011).

<sup>437</sup> Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter History*, p.327.

### Viscount Lymington; Ideologue and Appeaser

Thus far, it has been emphasised Lymington was not an obscured presence in 1930s Britain. He held varying degrees of prominence in a variety of circles; agriculturalism, high politics, the aristocracy, as well as the British far-right. It was in 1938 and 1939, however, that Lymington truly cemented his position as a sought after and respected ideologue of national prominence and within Britain's magnetic field of fascism. He intrigued prominent fascist figures, building around him through his journalistic and political activities in the appeasement movement a network of fascists and high-profile figures that reached for him new levels of popularity. This chapter seeks to demonstrate these points and will comprise of three sections. Firstly, his 1938 text *Famine in England* and its ideas will be examined. This is because it not only highlights key developments in Lymington's worldview, but because the ideas within the text are intrinsically connected to his appeasement politics, that of existential fear over the future of the 'white race'. Then, we will turn to the aftermath of the books release, in the form of responses to it and its exposure. The third section will approach Lymington's role in the appeasement movement. As 1938 progressed and international relations intensified, Lymington became increasingly aware of the growing prospect of war. So, in October 1938, Lymington founded the British Council Against European Commitments (BCAEC). The next December, Lymington founded the magazine *The New Pioneer*, which while not officially connected to the BCAEC was edited by and contributed to by Lymington and was a manifestation of his politics in the late 1930s. The appeasement movement had attracted groups from all over the British political spectrum, however by 1938 the advocations for peace almost entirely came from 'the hard-core positive enthusiasts for Germany.'<sup>438</sup> Indeed, the fact that Lymington's admiration for Nazism clashed with his English ultra-nationalism and caused a contradiction in his politics will be a reoccurring theme throughout this chapter.

It is important to emphasise that Lymington entered 1938 a popular figure. For example, his 1931 text *Ich Dien: The Tory Path*, the ideas of which were presented earlier, attracted positive reviews across a variety of national press outlets. It was described as a 'brilliant excursion', 'food for reflection', 'refreshing and stimulating', and 'a notable book', amongst other positive reviews.<sup>439</sup> He also, throughout the 1930s and 1940s, remained a force to be reckoned with within Britain's agricultural circles. Nonetheless, the position Lymington held in both the

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<sup>438</sup> Griffiths, 'What Did You Do During the War', p.77; For more see; Tim Bouverie, *Appeasing Hitler: Chamberlain, Churchill and the Road to War* (London: Bodley Head, 2019); Frank McDonough, *Hitler, Chamberlain and Appeasement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>439</sup> *Belfast News-Letter*, 2 July 1931, p.13; *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 27 July 1931, p.2; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 5 August 1931, p.4; *The Scotsman*, 6 August 1931, p.2; *Hampshire Advertiser*, 31 October 1931, p.7; *Gloucester Echo*, 9 January 1931, p.3; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 22 June 1931, p.2; *Skegness News*, 19 August 1931, p.2.

national press, the links he had to various political groups and particularly the connections he made with fascist figures strengthen and expanded in 1938 to new levels and do place him, this study argues, firmly within the scope of British fascist studies.

### *Famine in England*

In his study of Lymington Philip Conford wrote that *Famine in England* 'sealed his reputation', it 'received widespread and overwhelmingly enthusiastic press coverage' and made Lymington 'something of a national celebrity'.<sup>440</sup> While it is a text riddled with racial supremacy, anti-Semitism, and pro-Nazi rhetoric, as has been noted by several scholars, it expanded Lymington's accessible circle and increased substantially the exposure of his ideas.<sup>441</sup> As shall be soon shown, a variety of contacts opened to Lymington after his book was published; The B. B. C., prominent Lords, Bishops and religious organisations, national press outlets at home and abroad as well as political organisations, one such being the British Union of Fascists. This will all be examined shortly. First, however, is the task of laying out the key arguments Lymington made in the text, as to show what exactly in his worldview was so appealing to those who praised him.

The text explicitly attempts a synthesis of ideas that have so far constituted Lymington's political trajectory; agricultural revival to the point of self-sufficiency and the co-constitutive racial and national regeneration necessary to return Britain and its empire from the state of degradation Lymington perceived. Lymington reiterated his view of fading racial health, writing 'sound stocks are perishing'. The British state was being 'too soft' and protected 'the evil and the unsound in their midst at the expense of the best.'<sup>442</sup> There was no hesitancy in Lymington's apocalyptic vision, his book was trying 'to show the choice between life and death.'<sup>443</sup> 'Death' in Lymington's was a type of race-death, represented through what he saw as the continued separation from land, the decline of the British Empire and ultimately the decline of Western civilisation. This may sound like an embellished description. It is not. If the 'slow poison of our people', which was benefiting the 'parasite classes', was to continue, Britain and thus the West would fall into chaos and death.<sup>444</sup>

Lymington placed emphasis on the necessity of empire and its safeguarding, consistently lamenting its failure to maintain itself militarily and economically, particularly concerned with the British Empire's borders and their

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<sup>440</sup> Philip Conford, 'Organic Society: Agriculture and Radical Politics in the Career of Gerard Wallop, Ninth Earl of Portsmouth (1898-1984)', *The Agricultural History Review*, Vol. 53 No. 1 (2005) pp.78-96 (p.83-84).

<sup>441</sup> Dietz, *Neo-Tories*, pp.24-27; Stone, *Responses*, pp.187-191.

<sup>442</sup> Viscount Lymington, *Famine in England* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938) p.117.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, p.207.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148; *Ibid.*, p.45.

relationship to England, for example, ‘while we are an empire, neglected land in England is an invitation to others to attack us for our lands abroad. While we are defenceless there can be no national health and no regeneration for the future.’<sup>445</sup> Borders and the defence of them was key to Lymington, who from his days in parliament saw a deep precarity in the capacity of Britain to defend its borders at home and abroad, which he reiterated in the text at hand.<sup>446</sup> As Nadine El Enany iterates, borders have consistently been throughout the history of the British Empire a site of racial exclusion and key to the maintenance of imperial structure: ‘Racial categorisation was the basis for the control of movement within, into and out of colonised territories throughout the British Empire.’<sup>447</sup> This is important as it ensures Lymington’s concerns over the connectedness of racial health and Empire and thus does not exclude him from the centrality of race to the administration of the empire itself; these ideas were not anomalous.<sup>448</sup> To Lymington, empire was the purest expression of white supremacy. Importantly, ‘death’ in Lymington’s perception was not limited to Britain and a declining imperial status but would ensure the destruction of the West; of civilisation itself. Lymington’s expression of death as the destruction of the West is to where we now turn.

Lymington held to a narrative of Western superiority that must be maintained and protected from threats. Western civilisation was faced with threats from ‘the menace of teeming yellow and brown races’ which were ‘land hungry’, and they could at any moment ‘turn on their western masters.’<sup>449</sup> The West was, in Lymington’s mind, white, as revealed in the following section detailing his anti-communism:

‘The communist genuinely believes that only a proletarian revolution will save the world. The destruction of white civilisation is for him the hope of world unity; therefore, to the communist war is to be welcomed. After war comes dissolution and the breakup of the old order.’<sup>450</sup>

It can be pieced together, then, that there was as represented in *Famine in England* a monolithic threat facing white Western civilisation. Communists and ‘yellow and brown’ races comprised this force. In fact, the concerns Lymington laid out in *Famine in England* appear to be a product of cultural and literary trends which became prevalent in the late-Victorian period. Stephen D. Arata, in his study of *Dracula* as emblematic of late-Victorian anxieties over what he labelled ‘reverse colonisation’, posited that such a theme ran through Gothic fiction as well

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid., p.142.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>447</sup> Nadine El-Enany, *Bordering Britain: Law, Race and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021) p.23.

<sup>448</sup> Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (New York: Duke University Press, 2015).

<sup>449</sup> Lymington, *Famine*, p.201-202.

<sup>450</sup> *Famine* p.20.

as non-fiction.<sup>451</sup> Arata suggested that up to the time of his writing (1990), literary criticism of texts such as *Dracula* had overlooked contextual or historicist influences informing the text. Regarding the historical context of *Dracula*, Arata wrote ‘the context includes the decline of Britain as a world power at the close of the nineteenth century; or rather, the way the perception of that decline was articulated by contemporary writers.’<sup>452</sup> Arata went further, to extend this context to late-Victorian fiction writ-large, stating it was ‘saturated with the sense that the entire nation – as a race of people, as a political and imperial force, as a social and cultural power – was in irretrievable decline.’<sup>453</sup> Rudyard Kipling, H. P. Lovecraft, Conan Doyle, as well as the aforementioned T. S. Elliot, all produced work mirroring this feeling of imperial, racial decline.<sup>454</sup> Decline, as we have seen, was a recurring and constant theme throughout Lymington’s political expression of the 1930s. As illustrated earlier through the work of Edward Said, Lymington certainly reflected and then produced imperial myths of inevitable British superiority and white supremacy. However, it was in *Famine in England* that this culturally proliferated fear of ‘reverse colonisation’ came most to the fore. The feeling of foreign races invading and capitulating the ‘civilised’ West was a theme which ran not only through Lymington’s work, but much of Late-Victorian and Edwardian culture. As Lymington wrote, ‘Upon us in the last resort the West depends.’<sup>455</sup> This was not just a European phenomenon, but a transatlantic one. The United States was also seeing an era of perceived decline at the time Lymington was writing, and prior. Indeed, the white supremacist Klu Klux Klan (K. K. K.) expressed some similar sentiments to Lymington and his milieu over the decline of ‘civilised’ society, racial degeneracy, and the faltering of the myth of white supremacy. Produced in an era identified by some as capitalist decline, both the K. K. K. and Lymington’s fascism are comparable through this transatlantic culture of perceived decline.<sup>456</sup> Indeed, one scholar has suggested of the American context that ‘the greatest force of this reaction and extremism’ was the second rising of the Klan throughout the 1920s.<sup>457</sup> Of course, both the Klan’s and Lymington’s fascism were fashioned too to meet the demands of their national context. The former was formulated through a legacy of Settler-Colonial dispossession and American White Supremacy, as illustrated recently by the historian Gerald

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<sup>451</sup> Stephen D. Arata, ‘The Occidental Tourist: ‘Dracula’ and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization’, *Victorian Studies* Vol.33 No.4 (1990) pp.621-645

<sup>452</sup> *Ibid.*, p.622

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid.*, p.623

<sup>455</sup> Lymington, *Famine*, p.208.

<sup>456</sup> For more on the use of Capitalist decline in an understanding of American fascism, see; Michael Joseph Roberto, *The Coming of the American Behemoth: The Origins of Fascism in the United States, 1920-1940* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018)

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.30-32

Horne.<sup>458</sup> It was in this legacy that the ‘germ’ of American fascism was rooted, as one 1938 text commented.<sup>459</sup> Equally, it can be asserted that a similar ‘germ’ of British fascism was present in Britain’s tradition of racial-imperialism, colonial expansion and resource extraction, as posited by scholars such as Evan Smith. It was not, however, until the late 1920s, ‘that it developed into a definite political force of ominous proportions.’<sup>460</sup> Lymington’s fascism was the product of such a ‘germ’ in the British, specifically English context, and combined with the developing transatlantic culture of perceived decline of the early twentieth century.

There was an additional threat presented in *Famine in England*. Indicating Lymington’s anti-Semitism, the ‘international financier’ appears as a shadowy and powerful figure in the text, allying with foreign races and communists to bring down all Lymington held dear. This was a sign of his conspiratorial anti-Semitism that was indeed common across the British fascist landscape.<sup>461</sup> Death, then, meant victory for these forces at the expense of the white West. In the book Britain was represented as the remaining bulwark of Western civilization and the only nation with capacity to save it, indicating Lymington’s ultra-nationalism. There can be no doubt Lymington’s fears over racial and civilizational superiority had reached by his writing of this book existential levels. There was, as he openly stated, an opportunity for ‘life’, for resistance to these threats, and the solutions he offered show not only his sinister and violent vision but a distinctly fascistic one. It was perhaps the closest explication he gave of how he was attracted to and often operated within what some scholars have called the ‘magnetic field’ of fascism.<sup>462</sup>

Lymington offered one broad solution to the problems he outlined. This was national regeneration. Invoking the examples of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, the solution to problems of empire, civilisation and racial was a regeneration project, of palingenesis, or ‘national rebirth’, to use Roger Griffin’s terminology.<sup>463</sup> However, it is important to note that the terms this was represented in were not abstract from Lymington’s societal positionality.

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<sup>458</sup> Gerald Horne, *The Counter-Revolution of 1836: Texas Slavery and the Roots of U. S. Fascism* (New York, International Publishers, 2022)

<sup>459</sup> A. B. Magil and Henry Stevens, *The Peril of Fascism: The Crisis of American Democracy* (New York: International Publishers, 1938) p.60

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.; Evan Smith, ‘The Pivot Empire: Australia and the imperial fascism of the British Union of Fascists’ *History Australia* Vol.14 No.3 (2017) pp.378-394

<sup>461</sup> Ibid., pp.45-52; This conspiratorial representation been noted as typical of the inter-war period by scholars, see; Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016); it was also recognised at the time by Jewish anti-fascists, see; ‘Jewish Labour Council’, *Sir Oswald Mosley and the Jews: Anti-Semitism in England*, No.1. (1935), 240/R/3/60/1, pp.1-4.

<sup>462</sup> The use of the term ‘Magnetic field of fascism’ has been used by scholars like Paxton to describe how actors and regimes ‘borrowed elements of fascist décor’, see; Robert O. Paxton, ‘The Five Stages of Fascism’ *The Journal Of Modern History* Vol.70 No. 1 (1998) pp.1-23 (p.3); Originally coined by Phillippe Burrin, ‘La France dans le champ magnetique des fascismes’ *Le Debat* 32 (November 1984) pp.52-72.

<sup>463</sup> Lymington, *Famine*, p.62; p.141; p.178; Roger Griffin, *A Fascist Century: Essays by Roger Griffin*, Matthew Feldman (ed) (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) pp.4-6.

His class position, as a landowning aristocratic farmer, fundamentally inflected upon his approach to a fascistic project of national rebirth. As such, the regeneration project he outlined began with agriculture; ‘regeneration of the soil must come before national revival.’<sup>464</sup> Without this, the rest of the necessary steps could not be complete. These were described too, often in violent terms; ‘If we serve our soil we can bring back the fertility of the strong breeds that will people the empire with desired men and women who could hold it against the tides of yellow men and brown.’<sup>465</sup> In an ode to his friend Anthony Ludovici and his prior advocations of slaughter through sacrifice for the greater racial good, Lymington followed suit, as through national rebirth ‘the sound stocks will be protected if necessary by sacrificing the bad stocks.’<sup>466</sup> This meant the eradication of ‘a scum of subhuman population’ which had developed as a result of ‘alien’ encroachment on England.<sup>467</sup> ‘Aliens’ being synonymous with immigrants and were placed in urban epicentres, particularly London: ‘Foreign invasion for England has not happened in war time. It has happened in the last hundred years of peace...These immigrants have invaded the slums and the high places as well.’<sup>468</sup> Lymington saw the cessation of this ‘invasion’ and possibly the sacrifice of the ‘subhuman population’ as key to his project of national revival.

The return of ‘merry England’, as Lymington wrote, was one built upon first agricultural, racial, imperial, but also, masculine, revival. The project of national rebirth Lymington was outlining here was through an identifiably masculine and patriarchal, as well as racial and imperial, lens. Lymington felt as though the women of England had been forcefully removed from their ‘traditional’ and ‘rightful’ place in the home, and that as a result women should be re-taught ‘the forgotten arts of housecraft.’<sup>469</sup> He saw the women of England as particularly effected by the modernisation of foodstuffs and the transition to imported goods. He stated elsewhere that he missed the days when women ‘baked wholemeal bread and did not confine their cooking to the use of a tin-opener.’<sup>470</sup> In Lymington’s view, education was also partly to blame; ‘modern education has deprived women of their instinctive and traditional skill’.<sup>471</sup> What this amounted to in his eyes was not only an affront to the traditional and sexist view of women as necessarily confined to the home, but, fundamentally, *unhealthy* women. Indeed, as a solution, Lymington saw the need to re-educate women through their re-entrenchment in the home, thus making the women of England ‘healthy’ again. He stated. For example, that the ‘northern stocks’ of women ‘flourish best’ as they

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<sup>464</sup> *Famine* p.118.

<sup>465</sup> *Famine* p.208.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42-43.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74

<sup>470</sup> *Ibid.*, p.76

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81



were away from the urbanised cities, and it was these healthy women who could 'breed' the new healthy stock integral to his vision of nationalist rebirth.<sup>472</sup> The British fascist emphasis on 'healthy women' has also been established by Julie Gottlieb, who suggested that what she called 'feminine fascism' held a focus on women 'staying close to home', stating that:

'The centrality of palingenetic metaphors contributed to the construction of the ideal fascist mother as the breeder and nurturer of a race reborn. Women's birthing function and the spiritual rebirth of the nation were easily conflated, as were the concepts of biology and destiny.'<sup>473</sup>

Lymington reflected much of these broader fascist concerns and the dependency of national rebirth upon 'healthy' women and their capacity to give birth to the 'correct stock', which was in turn dependent in his view upon adequate land and race. However, there was a tension in Lymington's thought here. He asked the reader in *Famine in England* how the problem of a deracinated female population which was being increasingly 'corrupted' by foreign 'aliens' could give birth to the new men needed for his ideal of national rebirth. Indeed, this was an insidious meeting point between whiteness and patriarchy for Lymington, an intersection if you will. Female reproduction could only lead to the salvation of the nation and empire through the modality of whiteness; 'the destruction of white civilisation' had to be combatted, in Lymington's eyes, through the *consolidation and reproduction* of whiteness, both epidermal, social and geo-political, in the form of expansion and re-population.<sup>474</sup>

Even the dominions of the British Empire would have to be repopulated by those of the correct racial blood. Those of the white 'Nordic races', and the restoration of their supremacy, was vital to Lymington, as seen here.

'We' means the white northern races of Europe united in solidarity to save the new world and Africa by human fertility. Except for South Africa, British stock almost predominates in the dominions. It is therefore right on biological grounds that we should people the dominions...there will be better results if we limit our crossbreeding to kindred Nordic stocks from Scandinavia, Germany, and Holland. These stocks, with our own, are the remnants...of the Nordic race which was the begetter of western civilisation and achievement even in the halcyon days of Greece.'<sup>475</sup>

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<sup>472</sup> *Famine* pp.190-191

<sup>473</sup> Julie V. Gottlieb, *Feminine Fascism: Women in Britain's Fascist Movement, 1923-1945* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000) pp.98-101

<sup>474</sup> *Famine* p.20

<sup>475</sup> *Famine* p.202-203.

While agricultural revival was key to Lymington, an influence of his occupations and societal position, there was also a compulsory need in his quest for national revival to propel the Nordic race into a position of mythic supremacy of global proportions, through the reproduction of whiteness and the re-entrenchment of women in the home. In Lymington's eyes this would rest upon the stable and self-sufficient state of agriculture in England. This led him to his conclusion, and the key ideological apparatus for the achievement of his goals, *Blut und boden*; 'It is blood and soil which will rule at last; but if they fail only anarchy and slavery succeed.'<sup>476</sup> Thus we have Lymington's own attempt at synthesising his domestic concerns, his position in which he cannot abstracted, placed in a broader apparatus of 'blood and soil', albeit tailored to his English nationalism and positionality within an imperial, aristocratic and agricultural substratum. It was, as Stone suggests, one of the clearest expressions of his eugenicist outlook and his consistent defence of 'Englishness by inbreeding and careful exclusion'.<sup>477</sup> *Famine in England*, with its violent racial vernacular, catapulted Lymington into the public hotseat, and the subsequent reactions of the public press shall now be turned to.

#### Lymington and *Famine in England* in the Public Eye

The text was reviewed in several different national papers, mostly in a positive light, and many of these offered Lymington the chance to contribute an article to their publication. George Buvyer of the *Daily Mail* wrote to Lymington asking him 'contribute either a special message or a short article' and stated he had been directly recommended by the National Pig Breeders Association.<sup>478</sup> Agricultural outlets, such as *The Dairy Farmer*, did give *Famine in England* a substantial amount of exposure. In the edition of June 1938 can be found a variety of reviews from many agricultural experts, academics, landowners, and farmers. A Dr Clunie Harvey wrote the text was 'most stimulating', the topics detailed in the book 'touch the roots of our very civilisation' and that he trusts 'the message will reach a wide audience.'<sup>479</sup> Elsewhere in the publication it was described as a book of 'vital importance', that it 'should be read by every Member of Parliament', and that it was 'a book full of interest.'<sup>480</sup> The editor of *The Cornishman*, Herbert Thomas, suggested to readers 'we shall do well to follow the lead of Lord Lymington', and Labour MP J. R. Clynes stated the book was 'like a seer's crystal', and to fail to follow his advice 'may mean national suicide.'<sup>481</sup> Even those with questions found positives. One reviewer, a Fellow of the Royal

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<sup>476</sup> *Famine* p.208.

<sup>477</sup> Dan Stone, *Responses*, p.116-117.

<sup>478</sup> George Buvyer to Lymington, 2 June 1938, 15M84/F147/117.

<sup>479</sup> *The Dairy Farmer*, June 1938, 15M84/F149/1.

<sup>480</sup> Reviews from Sir John Russell, Captain Cosmo Douglas and Dr S. Vere Pearson respectively; *The Dairy Farmer*, June 1938, 15M84/F149/1.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*

Economic Society, Mr A. H. Brown, wrote 'Fancy talking about 'Blood and Soil' in England in 1938, and of racial purity to English people!'. This was, however, followed with 'On the other hand, I entirely agree (with some qualifications) with his remarks about foreign trade and usury'.<sup>482</sup> The *Estates Gazette* warned their readers the book may be perceived as 'alarmist', but nonetheless was 'very interesting' and deserved widespread consideration.<sup>483</sup> It was given said consideration, in another section of the publication, in which Lymington's 'formal challenge' to government was praised. Lymington's propositions were linked to one of his own inspirations, agriculturalist Professor George Stapledon, who's Lymington's arguments were seen as 'naturally akin to', and consequently gifted further legitimisation.<sup>484</sup>

Stapledon in fact reviewed *Famine in England* for *The Spectator*, and he professed his views to be 'in harmony' with Lymington's.<sup>485</sup> Stapledon offers particular praise of Lymington's insistence in *Famine in England* that not only is national regeneration or rebirth necessary, but that this should begin with and rest upon rural revival.<sup>486</sup> Martin-Leake, Director of Agriculture of the United Provinces, agricultural author and Cambridge academic also wrote to Lymington, praising the ideas within it. Suggesting the ideas would merge well with continental style corporatism, his own conceptions of rural revival and that Lymington should work to establish his ideas. Indeed, Martin-Leake wrote 'I feel sure the results would simply reward you and go far to show how the fertility of the land could be maintained and productivity of the soil increased.'<sup>487</sup> Lymington's book did reach well out of agricultural circles. There was too a review of Lymington's work in the magazine of G. K. Chesterton, associate of Bertrand Russel and George Bernard Shaw, which described the book as 'priceless', 'utterly reliable and perennially readable', and as dealing with a 'burning issue'.<sup>488</sup> Such was the magnitude of the initial reaction to *Famine in England*, it was not long before the B. B. C. came knocking.

Following the publication of *Famine in England*, the West of England Regional Director of the B. B. C., G. C. Beadle contacted Lymington on 16 May 1938. The director enthused over how good it would be to have someone of his calibre talk on the subject of agriculture, as he had 'very strongly expressed views' on the subject and would be interested in discussing this further with Lymington.<sup>489</sup> The correspondence continued, and in early August Lymington was formally invited to speak in an autumn production on British agriculture, the B. B. C. again stating

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<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> *Estates Gazette*, 9 April 1938, 15M84/F149/7, p.1.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>485</sup> *The Spectator*, 8 April 1938.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid.

<sup>487</sup> H. Martin-Leake to Lymington, 11 October 1938, 15M84/25/pp.1-3.

<sup>488</sup> *G. K. 's Weekly*, 21 April 1938.

<sup>489</sup> G.C. Beadle to Lymington, 16 May 1938, 15M84/F147/46/2.

they would ‘very much like the opportunity’ to speak to Lymington.<sup>490</sup> Before the program aired on 29 November 1938, Lymington had several face to face meetings with P. F. Edgard O. B. E., the Midlands Director of the B. B. C. at Lymington’s London flat. They regularly discussed the mechanisation of agriculture and discussed Lymington’s approaching debate on ‘the need for mechanisation’, against which he would speak.<sup>491</sup>

This airtime on the B. B. C. can be coupled with another event to be presented as Lymington’s highest moments of public exposure. On 14 April 1938 the London Press Exchange invited Lymington to speak in front of a large selection of high-profile journalists and public figures at the grand Foyle’s luncheon in May.<sup>492</sup> Lymington would speak there on the topic of his book and his contents, and the reactions to this speech and subsequent contacts made are worth examining. Another speaker at the event was Prince Christopher of Greece, who was noted alongside Lymington in many of the reporting papers.

Lymington was not afraid of repeating some of his explicit eugenic positions in public. This earned him, with some exceptions, a positive press review in the outcome of his speech. The *Daily Independent* reported that Lymington ‘gave an amazing address’, he ‘protested against welcoming the Basque children when there are English children going hungry’, and that ‘we should protect and care for the sound in mind and body before we protect the unsound.’<sup>493</sup> The *Glasgow Herald* reported Lymington speaking on the necessity for food reserves, and that the country should be thankful for the ‘level-headed’ Neville Chamberlain, which was typical of Lymington given his strong presence in the anti-war movement at this time.<sup>494</sup> Elsewhere *The Times* tapped into Lymington’s support for Chamberlain and the necessity for food reserves.<sup>495</sup> Another popular paper reported a similar story of support for Chamberlain in Lymington’s speech, as well as quoting him saying a war could ‘only make the world safe for Bolshevism’, and does too record substantial amounts of applause for his espousals.<sup>496</sup>

Another publication which gave Lymington’s speech at the Foyles Luncheon a positive report was the *Daily Sketch*, which wrote Lymington’s was ‘the best speech’, that he had ‘a good delivery and a firm voice.’<sup>497</sup> His anti-communism was publicly stated and praised by papers such as the *Daily Mail*, which put him in a list of ‘the ten best speakers in the country’, immediately researched his background, and highlighted their intrigue with

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<sup>490</sup> The British Broadcasting Corporation to Lymington, 15M84/F147/24.

<sup>491</sup> P. F. Edgard O. B. E. to Lymington, 20 October 1938, 15M84/F147/21.

<sup>492</sup> The London Press Exchange to Lymington, 14 April 1938, 15M84/F147/143.

<sup>493</sup> *Daily Independent*, 19 March 1938.

<sup>494</sup> *Glasgow Herald*, 19 March 1938.

<sup>495</sup> *The Times*, 19 March 1938.

<sup>496</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 19 March 1938.

<sup>497</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 19 March 1938.

him.<sup>498</sup> His speech was recorded by the paper as ‘strong stuff’, that he ‘walloped the communists’ (a play on Lymington’s real name), and was praised for stating ‘we ought to help the sound before the unsound and the misfits.’<sup>499</sup> As we can see, some major media outlets that attended Lymington’s speech, while not latching on to some of violent aspects of his book, had little issue in praising his general arguments.

There was also an interesting element of both *Famine in England* and the following speech Lymington made at the Foyle Luncheon, and that is the attraction of certain women’s groups to his work and ideas. It was reported that the viewership at Foyle’s was ‘crowded mainly with women listening to him intently.’<sup>500</sup> This was not anomalous vis-a-vis *Famine in England*, for in the text Lymington details the specific position of women in his apocalyptic vision of decline. According to Lymington, women had lost their place in the home and most probably being heavily influenced by his anti-feminist friend Ludovici, the question of decline was ‘even more a problem for the women than it is for men.’<sup>501</sup> This was picked up in his speech at Foyles.

One outlet recorded Lymington as ‘attacking British housewives’, stating he said, ‘they can’t cook’ and ‘it’s appalling to think of the millions we spend on education and the little we have to show for it in the way of competent housewives.’ Indeed, Lymington was further quoted:

‘British housewives can’t even cook a joint and two vegetables properly – let alone the more interesting dishes...What typical British home you take me into and show me a housewife who can cook a meal intelligently?’<sup>502</sup>

This was well in the character of *Famine in England*, in which Lymington emphasised as part of rural and national rebirth the country must ‘ask our women to learn the forgotten arts of housecraft.’<sup>503</sup> This was connected to Lymington’s concern for fresh, domestically produced goods as a necessary component of England’s need for self-sufficiency. Lymington lamented in *Famine England* the loss of the days when ‘women baked wholemeal bread and did not confine their cooking to the use of a tin opener.’<sup>504</sup> Despite these views on the state of the home, domestic labour Lymington’s view of women as central to this, he attracted attention from certain women’s clubs and organisations. After *Famine in England*’s publication and in response to another public appearance, Louise

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<sup>498</sup> *The Daily Mail*, 19 March 1938.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>500</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 19 March 1938.

<sup>501</sup> *Famine in England*, p.187.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>503</sup> *Famine* p.74.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, p.76.

Andree Coury, founder of the 'Modern Girls Club' contacted Lymington and informed him his speech was 'magnificent.' Coury and her peers were 'most interested and impressed' by what he had to say, and that he was formally invited to speak at a variety of women's clubs such as 'The Fairy Corner Club', the 'Woman of Today Club' and even contribute to the magazine 'Modern Girl'.<sup>505</sup> This was not the first time Lymington's position as a growing ideologue of many avenues of British cultural and political life had led him into women's circles. In 1932 the Conservative Central Office arranged a series of lectures on 'current politics' at the Ladies Carlton Club, and Lymington was booked to speak alongside future Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, Anthony Eden.<sup>506</sup> As we can see, such was Lymington's development as a public figure, prior to the publication of *Famine in England* he was a well-connected figure, and his 1938 text only expanded his potential reach.

Importantly, Lymington's speech did not go without criticism. The *Daily Express*, while writing up Lymington as the 'most eloquent' of all the speakers at the Foyle Luncheon, also stated he spoke 'some sense, some nonsense.'<sup>507</sup> It was written in this piece that he was 'terrified of Bolshevism', quoting his speech; 'The forces of the left will encircle us while we sleep', and that what had destroyed civilisation was 'letting down the floodgates of alienism'. Describing his career, the piece wrote he 'resigned his seat in parliament because his Tory party wasn't Right enough'.<sup>508</sup> It also commented that he joined a 'genteel-fascist movement called the English Mystery'.<sup>509</sup> Additionally, the *Yorkshire Observer* described his ideas as 'imaginative rather than realistic' and criticised his antagonistic stance toward 'internationalism' and 'alienism'.<sup>510</sup> The piece also likened Lymington's sentiments to those heard from Nazi Germany, which was followed by the labelling of Lymington as a 'British Hitler'.<sup>511</sup>

Lymington's racial politics and sympathy for Nazi Germany did not go completely unnoticed or without criticism in the press, but the feedback he would have seen was overwhelmingly positive. Moreover, the aftermath of *Famine in England* further cemented Lymington's place as a prominent ideologue within the British far-right and fascist landscape. However, he simultaneously attracted attention from powerful state actors and government representatives, indicating his prominence and area of operation in both the fascist and governmental landscape.

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<sup>505</sup> Louise Andree Coury to Lord Lymington, 6 April 1938, 15M84/F147/72.

<sup>506</sup> *The Times*, 9 May 1932.

<sup>507</sup> *Daily Express*, 19 March 1938.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>510</sup> *Yorkshire Observer*, 19 March 1938.

<sup>511</sup> *Ibid.*

To demonstrate this, a wealth of positive reaction from a variety of prominent individuals and organisations, ranging from former diehard Conservatives to fascists, shall now be exhumed.

The first case that can be examined are a series of letters from the British Council, a state organisation comprised of high-profile political figures. These included Lord Lloyd of Dolobran, who was chairman, as well as Lord Riverdale of Sheffield, Lord Tyrell of Avon, a diehard Conservative, as well Member of Parliament Sir John Power. The patron of the organisation was the King of England, and the organisation was tasked with furthering the cultural influence of the British Empire around the world. Lymington was contacted by a representative of the group and stated he had met Lymington ‘some years ago in connection with the English Mistry’, and that following *Famine in England* and a direct suggestion from the chairman, Lord Lloyd of Dolobran, Lymington would be a good choice to contribute several articles on the subject of ‘British Agriculture Today’. The pieces would be sent to Scandinavia, Central European and Balkan countries as representative state press on behalf of the British state.<sup>512</sup> In Lymington’s response, we find him thanking the British Council for the praise they have bestowed upon him and for sharing his beliefs. However, Lymington had to ‘reluctantly refuse’ as he had ‘so much work on hand’ and ‘promised so many articles.’ He then stated he thought it would be ‘very difficult to do an article on British Agriculture today which would conscientiously reflect well on the good name of this country, as there is no doubt that agriculture is still being sacrificed to foreign investments.’<sup>513</sup> There was also a letter from a Reverend A. H. Canon Villers, who after informing Lymington his book had filled his parish with hope, wrote; ‘if you ever come into such a position of power in the country that you will be able to carry out your ideals, do not forget who will be your best friends and most ardent supporters – the Roman Catholic priests who will be able to supply you with thousands of colonists, fanatically devoted to your purpose.’<sup>514</sup>

There were other reactionary groups like John Brown’s British Democratic Party who found Lymington’s work appealing and asked him to meet with their representatives in London on multiple occasions.<sup>515</sup> Lymington was also invited to speak at a workshop on 14 May by the Junior Imperial and Constitutional League. The president was the Countess of Plymouth, and the chairman was Ronald Cartland M. P. It was again an organisation set up by the Conservative Party, founded in 1906, and represented a powerful segment of state operators. They informed Lymington they were ‘extremely keen’ to book him in for the workshop and they he could expect a large audience.

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<sup>512</sup> E. D. O. Brian Esq. to Lord Lymington, 16 August 1938, 15M84/F147/28.

<sup>513</sup> Lymington to E. D. O. Brian Esq., 18 August 1938, 15M84/F147/27.

<sup>514</sup> Rev. A. H. Canon Villers to Lord Lymington, 27 May 1938, 15M84/F184/5.

<sup>515</sup> John Brown to Lord Lymington, 15M84/F147/43, 9 May 1938; 28 May 1938, 15M84/F147/4.

The overall topic of the workshop would be ‘The future of Capitalist society’, and Lymington was invited to speak on ‘The Future of the Land’.<sup>516</sup>

Another organisation with the King of England as its patron was The English-Speaking Union, the president of which was the Marquess of Willingdon. Lymington was again invited to speak at an event about his book.<sup>517</sup> Lymington, despite (an admittedly few) press outlets catching on to his open sympathy for Nazi Germany and his fascistic politics, was an attractive prospect to powerful figures of high politics and landed property,<sup>518</sup> particularly following the publication of *Famine in England*. It is important to stress that *Famine in England* simply enhanced Lymington’s reputation with the figures of high politics, rather than construct it. He had retained contacts from his time in parliament. For example, in December 1937, Lymington discussed drafts of *Famine in England* in a series of letters with the future Governor of Burma Reginald Dorman-Smith, Conservative member and former member of the English Mistery. They mulled over articles Lymington published in *The Telegraph* and professed to each other their interest in the Nazi project.<sup>519</sup> While, in the aftermath of *Famine in England*, Lymington enjoyed an elevated position in the eyes of state figures, agricultural circles and popular journalistic outlets, he also attracted the attention of open fascists, to which attention now turns.

Lymington held a position in the intellectual milieu of Britain’s inter war far-right and fascist areas prior to the publication of *Famine in England*. As well as his operations in an around the English Mistery and English Array, his close relationships with other prominent fascistic ideologues like Anthony Ludovici and communications through his organisations with the British Union of Fascists, he wrote for journalistic outlets like the English Review. This, as Bernhard Dietz explores, was one of the key journalistic outlets that diehard Conservatives and fascists alike revolved around and operated through.<sup>520</sup> In 1937 Lymington published an article through the *English Review* which spoke of the need to evaluate and provide new protections for British imperial commerce, a theme brought to fore in *Famine in England*: ‘The Empire cannot remain a reality if it is going to be based on trade which corrupts and saps the foundations of life in the home country.’<sup>521</sup> Lymington was already an active

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<sup>516</sup> Ronald Cartland M.P. to Lord Lymington, 12 April 1938, 15M84/F147/9.

<sup>517</sup> Marquess of Willingdon to Lord Lymington, 23 April 1938, 15M84.F148/131.

<sup>518</sup> Lymington obtained favour with the Central Landowners Association, speaking at an event hosted by the organisation on the topic of *Famine in England*; R. F. Sherman to Lord Lymington, 6 May 1938, 15M84/F147/119.

<sup>519</sup> Reginald Dorman-Smith M. P. to Lord Lymington, 16 December 1937, 15M84/F147/121; Lymington to Reginald Dorman-Smith M. P., 29 December 1937, 15M84/F147/120.

<sup>520</sup> Dietz, *Neo-Tories*, pp.21-27.

<sup>521</sup> Viscount Lymington, ‘Folly or Fertility: An Essay on Agriculture and National Independence’, *The English Review*, 1937, 15M84/F149/111, pp.1-7.



figure in the far-right milieu of 1930s before *Famine in England*, but similarly to other avenues of his life, he became increasingly in-demand following the 1938 book.

Attendee of the English Array and member of the British Union of Fascists, J. F. C. Fuller, wrote in *The Patriot* there could be ‘no doubt’ Lymington’s ideas were in ‘the highest interests of the nation’, and that he must be listened to ‘in the hour of need.’<sup>522</sup> Fuller was not the only member of the BUF to profess interest in Lymington’s work. Alexander Raven Thomson was an active and prominent member of the British Union of Fascists, being the BUF’s Director of Policy he was highly prolific in their publications. It is likely Thomson would have known of Lymington before *Famine in England*, if not through the interactions between Lymington’s organisations and the BUF discussed previously, then Lymington’s presence in the BUF press would indicate prior awareness. In November 1936 *Action*, a BUF publication, reported positively on a speech Lymington made alongside Reginald Dorman Smith M. P., the then chairman of the National Farmers Union, in London. The content of Lymington’s speech was regarding the domestic production of beef and the potential of agricultural markets to aid in Britain’s unemployment issues, mirroring his parliamentary focuses. Lymington was also reported in *Action* as illuminating why ‘foreign investments are safe whilst financial democracy lasts’, and that it was ‘hopeless to expect this internationally minded Government to look inward at its own affairs’.<sup>523</sup> There was then, also, the BUF’s praise of the *English Review*, a journal which Lymington contributed to and served as an editor for. Lymington’s 1937 article, ‘Folly or Fertility’, was praised in *Action*; ‘Readers of *Action* will find in the *English Review* much with which they can agree’, with particular praise to Lymington’s piece.<sup>524</sup> Elsewhere, the *English Review* was described in *Action* as an ‘admirable journal’ and ‘one of the few existing correctives to the all-pervasive and disintegrative left propaganda’, alongside praise of Lymington’s political peer, Anthony Ludovici.<sup>525</sup> Evidently, then, Lymington’s name and activities would have passed through BUF circles, and following *Famine in England* there can be doubt, as Alexander Raven Thomson as well as Oswald Mosley their positive thoughts on Lymington known.

In *The Dairy Farmer* can be found a section in which Oswald Mosley and the BUF’s view of *Famine in England* is examined. It was written that ‘The British Union of Fascists welcomes Viscount Lymington’s book...as a last desperate endeavour to awaken the British people to their danger before it is too late.’<sup>526</sup> Lymington was

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<sup>522</sup> J. F. C. Fuller, *The Patriot*, 7 April 1938.

<sup>523</sup> *Action*, 14 November 1936, p.15.

<sup>524</sup> *Action*, 10 April 1937, p.12.

<sup>525</sup> *Action*, 20 February 1937, p.12.

<sup>526</sup> *The Dairy Farmer*, July 1938, p.3.

understood in the piece as ‘like a Tory of the old school’, and not a fascist, but as supporting ‘the policy which Sir Oswald Mosley has advocated all over England during the past five years’.<sup>527</sup> Alexander Raven Thomson wrote to Lymington himself following *Famine in England*, and the communications between them reveal intentions of further cooperation.

Lymington was informed by Alexander Raven Thomson that his book was ‘excellent’, and which the latter had been ‘quoting extensively’. The BUF’s positive relationship with Ludovici was again made clear, and Raven Thomson asked Lymington whether he would follow Ludovici’s example and write articles for the BUF press, preferably under his real name.<sup>528</sup> The response from our subject was a positive one. However, Lymington informed Raven Thomson he was ‘overwhelmed’ with article requests, and specifically had made a substantial commitment to T. S. Elliot’s *Criterion* which would require his attention for some time. Lymington did state he would do what he could, and that he ‘would be glad if you would write to me later to remind me of this.’<sup>529</sup> It is difficult to tell whether Lymington did contribute to the BUF press in the form of a direct article. It may be that developments leading to the outbreak of war overtook both parties, and that Lymington simply prioritised other commitments. Potentially, he contributed anonymously. There is little evidence to say, however, that Lymington had too many ideological issues with contributing to the BUF press.

It was not just the largest fascist party that found Lymington’s work attractive, but Arnold Leese and his Imperial Fascist League (IFL), too. Leese was ‘one of the period’s most fanatical, uncompromising and idiosyncratic of fascists.’<sup>530</sup> Indeed, a previous compatriot of Lymington’s, Sanderson, had been involved with the IFL and Leese during his operations with Lymington in the English Mystery. Lymington and the IFL, while not being in direct contact, had clear links through, at the very least, mutual political peers. There was clear potential for a more ideological convergence too, as Leese forwarded a theory of a new ‘governing aristocracy’, a ‘new governing caste of character and service’ of ‘pure Aryan stock’.<sup>531</sup> Leese wrote to Lymington admitting he had read *Famine in England* with ‘great pleasure’, and that he thought the ‘policy of the Imperial Fascist League identical with which you advocate’.<sup>532</sup> Praising the book, Leese wrote he also knew ‘the Jew menace must be met radically’ and

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<sup>527</sup> Ibid.

<sup>528</sup> Alexander Raven Thomson to Lord Lymington, 30 June 1938, 15M84/F148/3/1.

<sup>529</sup> Lymington to Alexander Raven Thomson, 4 July 1938, 15M84/F147/40.

<sup>530</sup> Linehan, *British Fascism*, p.71.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid., pp.71-72.

<sup>532</sup> Arnold Leese to Lymington, 5 April 1938, 15M84/F148/4.

asks that Lymington sent a number of copies to the IFL so they could distribute to its members and place on sale.<sup>533</sup>

As we can see from the reactions to *Famine in England* and their links to prior appeals to Lymington's ideals and activities, he was a considerable force in multiple avenues of British inter-war life. Politically, he held the favour of powerful state figures, aristocrats, and politicians, who following the publication, elevated their positive opinion of Lymington requests of explicit cooperation. There was then the agricultural and mainstream press, who overwhelmingly reacted positively to Lymington's publication, and this secured airtime on the B. B. C. and publicity in major newspapers. Then were also the political appeals from a variety of organisations and of course, the extended hands of the BUF and IFL, securing Lymington's position as an attractive intellectual in the eyes of fascist groups.

Positive reactions also were not exclusive to Britain, there were international reactions. The South African agricultural magazine *Natal Mercury* also contacted Lymington, expressing interest in his work and asking his advice on a variety of farming methods.<sup>534</sup> It also seems the case that *Famine in England* remained popular into World War Two despite its open sympathy with fascism and Nazism. In March 1941 publishers H. F. & G. Witherby confirmed there was still at that point a 'steady demand' for the text and that they would continue publishing it.<sup>535</sup> It can be said, then, that Lymington was not only a popular agricultural ideologue and in a concentrated stratum of the early British 1930s far-right a popular author and activist, but following the publication of *Famine in England* he became an identifiable voice on a national setting. Having his ideas exposed to both the national press and to Britain's fascist landscape opened for Lymington new doors. Specifically, as war approached, how deeply Lymington could immerse himself in the British fascist milieu of the late 1930s.

#### The British Council Against European Commitments and *The New Pioneer*

As we have seen in the above sections and the previous chapter, Lymington was not afraid to comment on the international politics of the late 1930s. He developed in the *Quarterly Gazette of the English Array* and *Famine in England* alongside his English ultra-nationalism and Nazi-sympathies, a particularly civilisational projection of European conflict. In that, if Britain was to go to war with Germany, it would only bring destruction to 'white' Europe and serve to benefit those who Lymington perceived as threats. This was the fundamental position of his

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<sup>533</sup> Ibid.

<sup>534</sup> The *Natal Mercury* to Lord Lymington, 12 July 1938, 15M84/F147/2.

<sup>535</sup> H. F. & G. Witherby to Lord Lymington, 5 March 1941, 15M84/F148/9/6.

appeasement politics and was at the heart of the BCAEC and *The New Pioneer*. This will be a running theme through this section, which will more generally attempt to outline Lymington's activities in the BCAEC, with the aid of *The New Pioneer*, and pinpoint the 'fellow travellers' and fascists he made on his journey further into the British fascist landscape.

The loudest calls from 1938 onwards for peace with Germany came from the British Union of Fascists, however Lymington operated alongside a stream of individuals that Martin Pugh understood to be to the right of the BUF. Pugh suggests the British Union of Fascists were, as war approached, outflanked by several extreme organisations on its right side. The Nordic League, the Anglo-German Fellowship, the White Knights of Britain are all listed as groups that sprung up on the BUF's flank. Pugh, importantly, adds the BCAEC, the *New Pioneer*, and English Array to this list too.<sup>536</sup> Pugh describes Lymington as, following events in Munich, bankrolling the BCAEC and carrying a 'rollcall' of former leading members of the BUF.<sup>537</sup> The BCAEC was essentially a congregation of fascists, so concentrated in their ideological commitment to fascism it paints a far clearer picture of the group ideology than the esoteric English Mystery or the mystical, indigenous fascism of the English Array. Indeed, this has led to Pugh commenting that Lymington had constructed with the BCAEC a 'phalanx' of fascists.<sup>538</sup> Dan Stone also recognised this, writing that this collection of fascists made Lymington and his organisations more serious 'in a way the Mystery never had been.'<sup>539</sup> Often, the BCAEC acted as a co-ordinating body for several other smaller groups to the right of the BUF who were (initially) opposed to war with Germany, and had deep sympathies with the Nazi project. One such group was the National Socialist League, led by former prominent BUF members William Joyce and John Beckett, the latter of whom was Mosley's Director of Publications. The former, who is perhaps more renowned among scholars of British fascism, was a regular member of several fascist groups and would later obtain recognition as 'Lord Haw-Haw', broadcasting his pro-Nazism on his own radio slot, before being hanged in 1946. There were several other figures who had become by this point accustomed with the fascistic elements of British politics that obtained membership in the BCAEC and too wrote for *The New Pioneer*. This fascist milieu included Major General Fuller, former member of the BUF and noted military scholar. Fuller had become very close with top Nazi officials and attended one of Hitler's birthdays in Berlin and was a popular member of the BCAEC and wrote for *The New Pioneer*.<sup>540</sup> A. K. Chesterton, who contributed frequently

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<sup>536</sup> Pugh, 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts', p.280.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

<sup>539</sup> Stone 'Breeding Superman', p.53.

<sup>540</sup> Griffiths, 'What Did You Do During the War', p.320.

to Lymington's *New Pioneer*, also joined the BCAEC. Chesterton and Lymington would become close and team up once again in the post-war period through the National Front after Victory, with the former later forming the League of Empire Loyalists, an extremist pro-imperialist group active until the 1960s. Alongside Chesterton and Lymington, Anthony Ludovici was also one of the most prolific contributors to *The New Pioneer*. There was then George Pitt-Rivers, who also operated through the British fascism realm.<sup>541</sup> Interned during the war, Pitt-Rivers was highlighted to the British state because of his affiliations with the BUF and other fascist groups in Britain, and tied himself particularly to Ludovici's ardent advocations for murderous eugenic solutions.<sup>542</sup> Francis Yeats-Brown also joined, which is unsurprising given his relationship with Lymington had grown in the years previous to this through their concern over the racial properties of the land and its health.<sup>543</sup> Yeats-Brown had powerful connections, and spent much of the 1930s touring Europe on journalistic endeavours for popular papers such as *The Observer*. Arnold Leese, a 'pioneer' of 'racial nationalism' and a mainstay of British fascism was too involved.<sup>544</sup> Other members included friends of Lymington such as Rolf Gardiner, as well as Admiral Domville, Lord Tavistock, Patrick Donner MP, the Earl of Tankerville, W. Craven-Ellis M. P. and Ben Greene.<sup>545</sup> This milieu of distinctly fascist minds and high-profile figures presents almost as a hive-mind of fascist thought and experience, these men maintaining their fascist dispositions and enabling Lymington to access more than ever before high-profile British fascists and enter into a reciprocal ideological and practical relationship with them.<sup>546</sup>

The dominant focus of the BCAEC and of *The New Pioneer* was the intensifying international scene of the late 1930s. The 'objects' of the former were to firstly 'uphold the principle that Great Britain must never again go to war except in the moral or material interests of the British people.'<sup>547</sup> The BCAEC aimed to steer Britain away from commitments that could involve it in future wars, but especially 'in relation to the current crisis.'<sup>548</sup> It also, much like the *Quarterly Gazette for the English Army*, warned against trusting mainstream press outlets. Lymington was very clear in his intention to 'ensure that the real facts on European affairs, often not published in the press, should be known to the British people.'<sup>549</sup> *The New Pioneer* mirrored much of Lymington's fears over what war on European soil would mean for the white race and stated the following.

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<sup>541</sup> Ibid., p.156.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., p.232.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid., p.252.

<sup>544</sup> Graham Macklin, *Failed Fuhrers*, pp.23-24.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid.

<sup>546</sup> See for more; Richard Griffiths, *Fellow Travelers of the Right: British Enthusiasts for Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011).

<sup>547</sup> British Council Against European Commitments, October Telegram, 15M84/F255/26.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid.

‘The white man is being held in the balance. The yellow races, who have guarded their land and kept green the wisdom of their ancestors, have taken the weapons of war and industry from the west. They are watching with patient, jealous eyes for the civil war of Europe – England versus Germany, Bolshevism versus internal regeneration.’<sup>550</sup>

As can be seen from this excerpt, Lymington rehashed through both the BCAEC and *The New Pioneer* an attitude toward the war like that which was put forward in *Famine in England*, one which anticipated communist success and racial degradation as the only results of another world war. *The New Pioneer* was also, however, a broad congregation of fascist minds which focused on broader subjects. A. K. Chesterton wrote on how fascist regeneration required ‘real economic freedom, not for the financier, but the consumer’, and that profit should be geared ‘for the general community’, for the good of the nation.<sup>551</sup> He also wrote of ‘rootless’ demographics such as Jews and travellers, and in many areas converged with Lymington’s own brand of agricultural fascism. The English race had ‘behind it upward of a thousand years rooted in English soil and tradition’ and unless they proclaimed once again ‘the supreme values of Englishness’, the fate of the race would be one of a ‘rootless existence’.<sup>552</sup> General Fuller wrote on the government’s policies of conscription, John Beckett on the value of English patriotism, and Ludovici on the value of retaining an English working class.<sup>553</sup> This is not to say Lymington through the publication diluted his prior principles or even discarded them. In fact, they became emphasised intellectual facets of the publication. He retained his strict monarchism and praised the way France had, in his eyes, respected their monarchy in ways the British had lamentably not, representing the ideals and influence of the Mistery and the Array.<sup>554</sup> He also repeated his intertwined anti-Semitism and anti-urbanism when writing of Jewish refugees to Australia, stating ‘Jews will make Australia another manufacturing country’ and allowing Jews into the country would only result in the ‘lowering of the standard of life in Australia’.<sup>555</sup> There were also articles produced by Lymington on the importance of craftsmen, the restoration of land in England and then empire, and the degrading effects of ‘aliens’ and ‘bad stock’ in England.<sup>556</sup> So, while *The New Pioneer* accompanied the BCAEC as an avenue for fascist expression, it also served Lymington’s position as an ideologue within the field of fascism without causing a dilution of his prior ideals.

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<sup>550</sup> Lymington, *The New Pioneer*, February 1939, p.77.

<sup>551</sup> A. K. Chesterton, *The New Pioneer*, January 1939, p.52.

<sup>552</sup> A. K. Chesterton, *The New Pioneer*, February 1939, p.73.

<sup>553</sup> J. F. C. Fuller, *The New Pioneer*, May 1939, p.142; John Beckett, April 1939, p.119; Anthony Ludovici, *The New Pioneer*, June 1939, p.177.

<sup>554</sup> Lymington, *The New Pioneer*, January 1939, p.36.

<sup>555</sup> Lymington, *The New Pioneer*, January 1939, p.38.

<sup>556</sup> Lymington, *The New Pioneer*, February 1939, p.74; April, 1939, p.152; July, 1939, p.194.

At one of the first meetings of the BCAEC Lymington lent his support to Neville Chamberlain and praised his appeasement policy. Those in government and the press who advocated war were labelled ‘warmongering’ and ‘false’. Lymington presented a benign Germany which, unlike Britain and Bolshevik Russia, had ‘no feeling’ for war.<sup>557</sup> Indeed, at the prospect of Britain being forced to ally with communists, Lymington’s speech was interrupted with anti-communist shouts such as ‘the red butchers’.<sup>558</sup> Lymington then moved onto Jews and painted them as lusting after war, that while Germany was not actually set on expansionism, the Jews were ‘bitterly hostile’ and burgeoning for war. This view was also held by Chesterton, who in *The New Pioneer* wrote of ‘warmongering’ Jews who were apparently set on engineering bloody conflict.<sup>559</sup>

Lymington then moved on to the subject of British security, which he separated from European security, and that while the racial health of the two were connected, in a ‘practical’ sense British interests and security remained autonomous from those of European states. This was connected to Lymington’s broader understanding of Britain and its empire being the crown of white civilisation. Lymington ended his speech with a profoundly racist confession of his fear over the future of the British Empire.

‘if we have a war, Europe, and first and foremost the British Empire, will, like the body of Caesar, be bleeding from wounds so that the little half men and the ranting sub-normals, who are so desperately anxious to drag us down, shall have a perfect proletariat throughout the world, while all civilisation and decency fought for and built up in twenty centuries is killed.’<sup>560</sup>

Lymington’s words were followed by talk led by George Pitt-Rivers on the Sudeten Germans, a topic the BCAEC frequently approached.<sup>561</sup> Pitt-Rivers roused the house with regeneration rhetoric typical of his fascism. Englishmen were to look to their country; ‘we have an England to rebuild’, the ‘spirit of it (England) is there, and it is rising everywhere.’<sup>562</sup> Pitt-Rivers revealed Lymington’s influence on him and the importance of land, stating ‘we can till our land and give back our people independence and strength; we can give them a status in life instead of making them slaves of a system over which they have no control...we can give the spirit of life and the spirit

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<sup>557</sup> ‘Minutes of Proceedings at a meeting organised by the British Council Against European Commitments’, 16 September 1938, 15M84/F255/28/

<sup>558</sup> Ibid.

<sup>559</sup> A. K. Chesterton, *The New Pioneer*, April 1939, p.146.

<sup>560</sup> ‘Minutes of Proceedings at a meeting organised by the British Council Against European Commitments’, 16 September 1938, 15M84/F255/28.

<sup>561</sup> British Council Against European Commitments, ‘Should Britain Fight; The British Position and Some Facts on the Sudeten Problem’, Undated, 15M84/F255/20.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid.

of regeneration which can only come with the next few years of peace.<sup>563</sup> This was met with a prolonged applause. The latter point, of peace being an opportunity for regeneration, indicated that Lymington and his milieu were having to reformulate their politics around the growing contradiction between pro-Nazism and English ultra-nationalism, which became a growing theme within the BCAEC writ-large.

In a BCAEC telegram it was written ‘it has become very clear that a focus is needed for all willing and patriotic helpers from so many quarters that rallied to our standard, not only with the idea of preventing war but suing peace to regenerate our people.’<sup>564</sup> Peace with Germany and the avoidance of war had become more than a measure of protection of Britain’s interests, but an opportunity. Elsewhere, Lymington wrote of the magnificent response the BCAEC had obtained, after fostering such a number of prominent fascists and aristocrats.<sup>565</sup> Lymington stated joyously they ‘cannot let the matter rest there in view of the magnificent response’ to the BCAEC, and that the group should aim to ‘secure a period of peace wherein we all might try to regenerate our country and help develop our Empire before it is too late.’<sup>566</sup> Regeneration as a central theme had been brought into Lymington’s new formulation of anti-war thinking, with peace now being an opportunity for grasping racial purity. Lymington wrote of the compulsion he felt for his work ‘to be continued in some form, that we try to retain some focus for our united efforts to build a healthy and happy race.’<sup>567</sup> The racial remained a pillar of Lymington’s politics even if he had identified a new potential outcome of peace in 1938.

Lymington entering completely the world of British fascism in the late 1930s in no way scotched his relationships with high society or formal politics. As we saw in the responses and aftermath to *Famine in England*, several organisations and individuals from the parliamentary sphere found him an attractive thinker and speaker. During his time in the BCAEC and through *The New Pioneer* this remained, and the former attracted its own attention from the highest offices of the state. The Conservative W. Craven Ellis wrote in *The New Pioneer* of the necessity of agriculture to the nation’s health and painted it in a similar state to Lymington, that is, dire.<sup>568</sup> Another parliamentarian, Sir Ernest Bennett M. P., wrote of the necessity of a national government which would ‘hold the reins of power for years to come against the reckless, confused and futile programme of the Labour party.’<sup>569</sup> Elsewhere, Sir Arnold Wilson M. P. discussed the Suez Canal Company and the threat of ‘vested interests’ to the

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<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> British Council Against European Commitments telegram to all members, Undated, 15M84/F255/23.

<sup>565</sup> Pugh, ‘Hurrah for the Blackshirts’, p.208.

<sup>566</sup> British Council Against European Commitments, October 1938, 15M84/F255/26.

<sup>567</sup> Ibid.

<sup>568</sup> W. Craven Ellis M. P., *The New Pioneer*, February 1939, p.68.

<sup>569</sup> Sir Ernest Bennett M. P., *The New Pioneer*, March 1939, p.96.



British empire.<sup>570</sup> Lymington's groups also cooperated in the late 1930s with established members of the aristocracy. *The New Pioneer* editorial team, of Lymington, Chesterton and Ludovici organised a talk by Lord Northbourne at Caxton Hall and worked with the Economic Reform Club.<sup>571</sup> Another example was Baron John de Rutzen's work in Lymington's magazine on Labour's agricultural policies.<sup>572</sup> The importance and reach of the BCAEC is mostly aptly indicated by the fact that the organisation and Lymington were discussed in the House of Commons, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir John Simon was ordered to keep an eye on their activities.<sup>573</sup> Following a letter from Lymington to Neville Chamberlain, in which Lymington praises the former's attitude and policy toward Germany, lines of communication were opened between Lymington and high office.<sup>574</sup> This came in the form of a recorded phone call between Sir John Simon and Lymington. Lymington outlined his intention to strengthen Chamberlain's hand, and that there is no reason for Britain to 'boil up' over issues between the Nazis and Czechoslovakia.<sup>575</sup> Sir John Simon responded by stating he does not disagree with Lymington, nor will they (the British state) reject his helping hand.<sup>576</sup> Lymington informed Simon he had been in contact with both Sudeten Germans and Nazi officials. He had stated his position was not to strengthen either of their hands, which was in keeping with Britain's supposed neutrality.<sup>577</sup> Lymington clearly acted upon his professed fears over Britain's safety and utilised his links with his German contacts to that effect. Lymington followed this with a question to the Chancellor, requesting his view on the matter. The latter suggested Lymington 'go slow' on the issue but reassured him by stating they are sympathetic and do not disagree.<sup>578</sup> The conversation ends with the Chancellor reiterating Lymington is free to act as he wills, that he is a 'free Englishman', has the right to free speech and that the government does not want to caution him.<sup>579</sup> What we can draw from this interaction is twofold. Firstly, Lymington and the BCAEC were not scotched from mainstream political power, and they did at points float into their line of vision. Secondly, despite concern being shown in the cabinet regarding Lymington's activities with the BCAEC, when it came to direct lines of communication the Chancellor did not chastise or hasten to restrict Lymington's activities, nor did he confess any disagreement with Lymington's intentions. While this does not suggest ideological traffic, explicitly, between the two, it does as per the Chancellor's own words indicate

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<sup>570</sup> Sir Arnold Wilson, M. P., *The New Pioneer*, April 1939, p.116.

<sup>571</sup> *The New Pioneer*, July 1939, p.242.

<sup>572</sup> Baron John de Rutzen, *The New Pioneer*, July 1939, p.180.

<sup>573</sup> Griffiths, 'What Did You Do During the War?', pp.328-331.

<sup>574</sup> British Council Against European Commitments, 'Telephone Conversation Between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Lord Lymington', 14 September 1938, 15M84/F255/22.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>577</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>578</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*

sympathy with Lymington's mindset. The BCAEC indicates what Richard Griffiths suggested was a turning point for many on the far-right of British politics who were previously emphatic in their pro-Nazism.<sup>580</sup> For Lymington, it was the confrontation between his longstanding pro-Nazism and his patriotism necessary for his English fascism. He successfully made this formulation in the BCAEC, recommending sympathy be had with Germany and their project and that for the sake of Britain's interests, war should be avoided.<sup>581</sup> This was not to be the case for long however, and as Griffiths correctly pointed out on this issue, Lymington eventually leant into his British patriotism and embraced the inevitability of war.<sup>582</sup>

The BCAEC and *The New Pioneer* also represents for Lymington both continuation and evolution. The former in the sense that both, but particularly his publication, continued ideas he presented in *Famine in England* concerning racial and civilisational decline. He also imbued his new groups with ideals around agricultural regeneration, royalism, imperialism, anti-urbanism and anti-Semitism. These were refined through his time in the Mistery and Array and meshed with other fascist minds such as Chesterton and Ludovici to produce a fascistic intellectual current in the BCAEC and *The New Pioneer* that can only be firmly within the murky world of late 1930s British fascism.

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<sup>580</sup> Griffiths, 'What Did You Do During the War?', pp.171-190.

<sup>581</sup> British Council Against European Commitments, 'Should Britain Fight; The British Position and Some Facts on the Sudeten Problem', Undated, 15M84/F255/20.

<sup>582</sup> Griffiths, 'What Did You Do During the War?' pp. 260-269.

### The Kinship in Husbandry

Upon the outbreak of the war Viscount Lymington wound up the activities of the English Array, the British Council Against European Commitments and *The New Pioneer*. This was due in part to the internment of fascists and fellow travelers, which meant groups that had displayed sympathy or overt support for the new enemies of Britain were heavily surveilled by the state. Lymington later recorded his fortune in this, as he was not interned. He wrote in his autobiography 'I suppose the British government was really tolerant in my case.'<sup>583</sup> The likelihood is his aristocratic and political standing within high politics saved him. Lymington had also embraced more patriotic activities and had attempted to fulfill his wartime duties. He became Vice Chairman of the Hampshire Agricultural Committee and aided in research for new ways to produce foodstuffs during wartime. His political activities ceased in their most explicit and extreme forms and war posed for him the ultimatum of continuing with his pro-Nazism or embracing his English ultra-nationalism. He reformulated his political veneer and accepted his duties to the English war cause, but he did not rescind his fascism. Instead, his new organization offered an opportunity for Lymington and his contacts, such as Rolf Gardiner, to continue their fascistic agriculturalism but this time in the guise of a wartime patriotism. As we shall see in this chapter, they maintained a noticeable sphere of influence and popularity. Agricultural history scholars have frequently recognized Lymington was in demand in organicist circles, and this did not cease to be the case during wartime. Thus, he was a founding member of the Kinship in Husbandry. Which was, as Philip M. Coupland suggested, an 'important nexus of influence in the emerging organic movement'.<sup>584</sup> It signified Lymington's further efforts to balance his pro-Nazism and British patriotism by turning further down the agricultural revival route, while retaining his more sinister politics and high-profile contacts.

The Kinship in Husbandry was founded in 1941 after Gardiner proposed the idea to Viscount Lymington. Gardiner had retained his skepticism of the war and wrote to Lymington in April 1941 that 'everywhere the immediate needs of war being made the excuse for unwise, shortsighted and unthrifty policies.'<sup>585</sup> Gardiner lamented the ongoing battle between machine production and those with an organically minded conscience, the displacement of local responsibility for authoritarian bureaucracy and a neglected countryside being further deprived of 'good husbandry'.<sup>586</sup> Gardiner proposed the Kinship as a nexus of operators which could attempt to rectify their respective localities and remain in intimate proximity with other core members, exchanging ideas and pooling

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<sup>583</sup> Dietz, *Neo-Tories*, p.71.

<sup>584</sup> Coupland, *Farming Fascism*, p.175.

<sup>585</sup> Rolf Gardiner to Viscount Lymington, 22 April 1941, 15M84/F196/1.

<sup>586</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge. It was emphasized 'it is not a question of assembling a group nor at all of forming a new political party but of drawing closer an existing community of conscience, sympathy and purpose in awareness of its potentialities.'<sup>587</sup> This existing community of conscience, it was emphasized, was to begin small and expand accordingly. The group was understood as a secretive society and would be a 'small, informal body of kindred spirits devoted to the reconstruction and reinvigoration of rural England.'<sup>588</sup>

Importantly, Dan Stone has pointed out that the Kinship was not simply an irrelevant esoteric footnote in British history, but that it was in fact less threatening to the establishment and that 'the group's ideas of ecology and self-sustenance were to some extent adopted by the Ministry for Agriculture during the war.'<sup>589</sup> Stone also emphasized that the seemingly harmless aim of initiating 'a forum in which members could share their experiments in modern farming' belies some underlying logics of the group. On the contrary, it was attractive to figures like Lymington, Gardiner and several previous members of the English Array because it held a 'eugenicist vision combined with a vitalist call on behalf of the sacred bond between nation and land.'<sup>590</sup> Dietz has drawn similar conclusions, describing how the group discussed 'racial decline, and national health, although their emphasis was on an agrarian renaissance, based on ecological principles and seen as a panacea against the evils of industrialization.'<sup>591</sup> Thus, the group was neither removed from the eugenic dispositions of members nor completely isolated from mainstream politics of state.

In examining the ideology of the Kinship in Husbandry as laid out in its founding documents, its inspirations and intentions are laid bare. It intended to 'advocate the virtues of husbandry', reconnect 'the love of man of for his native soil' and to 'define and strengthen post-war opposition to every activity that treats man as machine and earth as inanimate factory plant.'<sup>592</sup> It emphasized the need for fresh food, railing against the mechanization and urbanization of English countryside and suggested modifications of the existing financial system to allow for 'a more efficient balancing of consumption with production.'<sup>593</sup> These objectives ring similar bells to Lymington's previous political espousals concerning a spiritual and economic refocusing along agricultural lines. Moreover, much like the English Mistery and English Array, the Kinship wanted to restore 'direct responsibility to the people

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<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> Richard Moore Colyer and Philip Conford, 'A 'Secret Society'? The Internal and External Relations of the Kinship in Husbandry, 1941-52' *Rural History* Vol.15 No.2 (2004) pp.189-206 (p.190).

<sup>589</sup> Stone, *Breeding Superman*, p.53.

<sup>590</sup> Stone, 'The Far Right and the Back-to-the-Land-Movement', p.187.

<sup>591</sup> Dietz, *Neo-Tories*, p.71.

<sup>592</sup> The Kinship of Husbandry, undated memorandum, 15M84/F196/21, p.1.

<sup>593</sup> Ibid.

by advocating the extension of local, regional and popular as opposed to centralized government.<sup>594</sup> Additional similarities that remained from Lymington's previous groups are described by Richard Moore-Colyer, who wrote the Kinship 'would stand four-square against any vision of a planned economy and would promote harmonious class co-existence under benevolent authority or, put another way, support the development of an independent (but ideally, deferential) peasantry beneath the watchful and fatherly eye of a responsible local landlord.'<sup>595</sup> Moore-Colyer writes a further description of Lymington's movements in the Kinship. Lymington 'was both a man with the perceived leadership qualities to transform England's long-term destiny, and a politician with a shrewd sense of what was feasible in given circumstances. His adoption of organic ideas may well have stemmed from a sense that they could be put to service of his longer-term ambition of racial regeneration.'<sup>596</sup>

Not only do these ideals reflect both Lymington and Gardiner's previous fixations on agricultural revival but cement their ideals of private property and its posterity. Lymington's fetishization of the mystical old-fashioned landlord was again brought to the surface and later, as previously mentioned, brought him to praise the policies of the authoritarian-right leader of Hungary, Horthy. There was also the key emphasis on class-coexistence, which sought to transcend class struggle rather than address class structure, in similar fashion to Lymington's English Array. Lymington's influence on the ideology of the Kinship in Husbandry is clear to see. However, the Kinship was not a carbon copy of Lymington's ideals, and it had a number of other key members and influences.

The Kinship was successfully formed after Gardiner's letter to Lymington detailing his proposal and thoughts. The first meeting of the group was at Merton College, Oxford, on 21 September 1941. Notes of this meeting were recorded, and the documents fortunately still survive. The importance of recognizing the problem was not simply between 'town and countryside', but 'producer and parasite' was underlined.<sup>597</sup> There was also discussion on the necessary regeneration of good 'sense of values, trend of taste and education.'<sup>598</sup> For this to be successful 'initiative and leadership' was needed, as well as the promotion, above all, of 'English values and English wisdom.'<sup>599</sup> Upon close examination the reactionary conservatism of the Kinship is revealed. In an essay

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<sup>594</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>595</sup> Richard Moore Colyer, 'Back to Basics: Rolf Gardiner, H. J. Massingham and 'A Kinship in Husbandry'' *Rural History* Vol. 12 No.1 (2002) pp.85-108) p.96.

<sup>596</sup> Moore-Colyer and Conford, 'A 'Secret Society'', p.200.

<sup>597</sup> Notes on Proceedings at Merton College, Oxford, 21 September 1941, 15M84/F196/2.

<sup>598</sup> Ibid.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid.

circulated among Kinship members in March 1942 this was stated explicitly. If the Kinship were to aim for the 'regeneration of rural England' this would be a 'Conservative revolution.'<sup>600</sup>

The Kinship, however, was not a political party nor a strict, hierarchical organization like Lymington's Array. It began as a core group of 12 members and to expand its influence encouraged these members to work with their contacts and in their local areas. As well as Lymington and Gardiner, right-wing aristocrat Lord Northbourne, the director of the English Folk Dance and Song Society Douglas Kennedy and agricultural writer Adrian Bell. Future Oxford Professor of Poetry, Edmund Blunden, botanist J. E. Hosking, Lymington's long term comrade Arthur Bryant and ruralist journalist H. J. Massingham were also involved. While not an official member, the British agricultural fascist Jorian Jenks was a frequent attendee of the Kinship. The group did meet every three months, but the loose style of organization, mainly forwarded by Gardiner, quickly caused unhappiness in other members. Moore-Colyer covers the disagreement between Gardiner and Massingham over how the group should be organized, which was exasperated by Gardiner's 'hectoring and over-bearing style', and resulted in Massingham along with Bryant considering undermining Gardiner.<sup>601</sup> Massingham aimed at making the group a more formal cogent organization, more of a business, which would require the Kinship to put its objective into the public realm.<sup>602</sup> Gardiner had envisioned the project to be understood as a guerilla movement, and so heavy was his hand that Massingham appears to have resigned for a short period in 1943. However, the matter was addressed at a meeting at Alden House on 3 April 1943. This meeting ended in a stalemate, but later Arthur Bryant would convince Gardiner a more concentrated style was needed, prompting Gardiner to give ground.<sup>603</sup>

This meeting, however, contains a revealing perception of Lymington. The meeting resulted in a stalemate between two of Massingham's allies, Massingham, and then Lymington, Northbourne and Gardiner. Massingham would write the following day, however, to Arthur Bryant, lamenting Gardiner's pugnacious and esoteric manner. Furthermore, he would describe Lymington, Gardiner and Northbourne as 'the three squires' who had clear elements of 'fascism peeping out'.<sup>604</sup> Concerns such as these would carry on for a number of months. There were further concerns over certain members stance on Nazi Germany, particularly Gardiner's. Gardiner frequently professed how he wished for a settlement with Nazi Germany even after the outbreak of war.<sup>605</sup> Bryant would

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<sup>600</sup> Kinship in Husbandry, 'Rotation of Crops' by J. E. Hosking, 1 March 1942, 15M84/F196/9.

<sup>601</sup> Moore-Colyer and Conford, 'A 'Secret Society'', p.196.

<sup>602</sup> Ibid., p.197.

<sup>603</sup> Ibid.

<sup>604</sup> H. J. Massingham to Arthur Bryant, 4 April 1943, LHC/E27.

<sup>605</sup> Moore-Colyer and Conford, 'A 'Secret Society'', p.198.

write of how Gardiner's positions on the war 'would totally ruin our whole body' and risked even further surveillance of state security services.<sup>606</sup>

The Kinship did have contacts which allowed them to diffuse their ideals into some popular fields. Lymington was on good terms with Malcom Messer, the editor of the *Farmer's Weekly*. As a result, several papers produced by the Kinship were published there in the summer of 1942.<sup>607</sup> Lymington was also a present voice in the House of Lords during his time in the Kinship, having succeeded his father in 1943, which allowed a prominent route of operation. The Kinship was unsurprisingly involved with other organicist movements and organisations. Among these were the Rural Construction Association, the Council for Church and Countryside, and the Bio-Dynamic Association and the Soil Association. Several members of the Kinship had key roles in these organisations, furthering the interests of all the organisations involved. Lymington had a central role, alongside Gardiner and several other Kinship members, in forming the Soil Association in the immediate post war period. Gardiner also had close contacts within the Council for Church and Countryside. Indeed, 'among the various issues exercising the minds of the Kinship was the contemporary role for the Church as an organ of rural regeneration.'<sup>608</sup> Gardiner's involvement in this approach to rural regeneration opened a vista of contacts for the Kinship, including organisations such as the Church Union and the Church Social Action Committee. This line of contact came to fruition in January 1943, at Abbey House Westminster. A delegation of Kinship members met with the secretary of the Church Union, Reverend Patrick McLaughlin. It was agreed that a dispatch be sent to the Church Assembly in March wherein a committee of Bishops evaluated the Kinship's proposition of Church involvement in their project of rural regeneration. After a review by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York at Lambeth Palace, the establishment of an Advisory Council for the Church and Countryside was confirmed, on which Rolf Gardiner and Lymington sat.<sup>609</sup>

A further demonstration of the Kinship's roots extending into British society can be found in a set of documents detailing contacts various members of the Kinship had been in contact with and were either interested in becoming formal members, attending as associates or that offered willing extensions of the Kinship's influence. These figures were considered willing to support 'a revival of true country values'.<sup>610</sup> Lymington's recommendations

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<sup>606</sup> Ibid., p.199.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

<sup>608</sup> Richard Moore-Colyer, 'Rolf Gardiner, English Patriot and the Council for Church and Countryside' *Agricultural History Review* Vol. 49 No.2 (2001) pp.187-209 (p.201).

<sup>609</sup> Ibid., p.202.

<sup>610</sup> Kinship in Husbandry, 'List of Those Who Might Possibly Support a Rural Revival', 8 May 1942, 15M84/F196/14, p.1.

indicate he was keen on reviving some interest in his former English Array members. His recommendations included Bryant Irvine, military men Captain de Grey and Colonel H. Holderness, and F. C. Loftus MP, all of whom had past associations with Lymington in the Array.<sup>611</sup> Lymington also recommended owner of the expansive Fenland Estate and former Array compatriot Roy Wilson and former BUF member Francis Yeats-Brown.<sup>612</sup> A number of prominent figures were elsewhere suggested by various Kinship members. Lady Eve Balfour was recommended by Rolf Gardiner, as well as Vernon Bartlett MP, the Duke of Bedford and the editor of the *Catholic Herald* Count Michael de la Bedoyere also being listed.<sup>613</sup> To also be found among this list of prominent figures is the Duke of Buccleuch, president of the Farmers Action Council Lt. Colonel Creagh-Scott, the head of the New Britain Campaign Colonel J. V. Delahave, the editor of *The Townsman* Robert Dunean and editor of the *Fortnightly Review* John Armitage.<sup>614</sup> The organizer of the Rural Industries Bureau, J. A. B. Hamilton was also named, alongside the West Regional Director of the B. B. C., Edward Liveing, a Major Mackintosh of the Ministry of Labor, Lord Innes and Frank Kendon, secretary of Cambridge University Press.<sup>615</sup> Other potential members included a wealth of farmers, landowners and agricultural writers compiling a list that can only be described as extensive. Evidently, the Kinship had a multitude of contacts within the organicist movements and had several powerful avenues which they had the potential to take advantage of. As Richard Moore-Colyer concluded after reviewing similar evidence to this study, 'it is straightforward enough to demonstrate that Kinship members were active, during the 1940s and early 50's, in a variety of organisations which promoted a philosophy of society sympathetic to their own.'<sup>616</sup>

Unfortunately for Lymington and Gardiner, the Kinship's activities were severely hampered by the war effort and their activities were consistently impaired. While they did manage several study meetings in Wiltshire and Anglesey, tours of farms, flax mills and potentially fertile ground for animal rearing, the war impeded their movements. Thus, when the group did meet, they often suffered from reduced numbers. As was recorded at a meeting at Oxford University on 18 October 1942, 24 members had registered interest of attendance. Only half turned up. This was recorded as being because of 'illness or accident to themselves, or their wives'.<sup>617</sup> Organicist author Philip Mairet had recorded on 5 July earlier that year that while the group had decided on 'action', this was

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<sup>611</sup> Ibid., 15M84/196/14, pp.6-11.

<sup>612</sup> Moore-Colyer and Conford, 'A 'Secret Society'', p.195.

<sup>613</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid., pp.3-5.

<sup>615</sup> Ibid., pp.9-11.

<sup>616</sup> Moore-Colyer and Conford, 'A 'Secret Society'', p.203.

<sup>617</sup> Kinship in Husbandry, 18 October 1942, 15M84/F196/16.



suspended due to the war and the pressing matter this brought. Mairet settled on suggesting the group was to be 'purely reflective organization' and ensure that 'those responsible for the agrarian disaster should be subjected to damaging criticism.'<sup>618</sup> While the Kinship did not turn out to be completely limited to polemics and literary reviews, there is no doubt during wartime its activities were far more reduced than they would have liked. Most members had various projects they had to sink their time into. It was recorded in one meeting, for example, that Viscount Lymington was dedicating time to the Hampshire County Agricultural Committee, and as Vice President he had set up a hostel for 'young lads waiting to be called up who are being trained in land-work'.<sup>619</sup> Indeed, Lymington used the Kinship to appeal to members 'to find him more of the right type.'<sup>620</sup>

While the Kinship persisted into the post-war era, it made little impact, with members such as Lymington being disillusioned with the state of politics and agriculture in post-war Britain. Before his move to Kenya, Lymington remained involved with some members of the Kinship in the immediate post-war period, but by this point the group was meeting more as a collection of nostalgists than political or agricultural activists.<sup>621</sup> This was not aided by the fact that the Kinship's ideas over fresh produce and agricultural autonomy were somewhat out of place in a war-torn, poor, and hungry Britain. While it is true that the Kinship made 'almost no headway in post-war Britain', this was not simply due to individual dissatisfaction.<sup>622</sup> On the contrary, 'the cherished notions of quality, concern for environmental health issues, and for the social and cultural structure of the countryside held dear by the Kinship, seemed archaic and even selfish to those concerned with feeding a hungry and war-torn country.'<sup>623</sup> Massingham's death in 1952 saw a conclusive end to the already evaporating Kinship, and the ideas that drove it all but disappeared until the last decades of the twentieth century.<sup>624</sup>

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<sup>618</sup> Kinship in Husbandry, Philip Mairet, 5 July 1942, 15M84/F196/15.

<sup>619</sup> Kinship in Husbandry, Meeting at Merton College, 18 October 1942, 15M84/F196/16.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid.

<sup>621</sup> Moore-Colyer and Conford, 'A 'Secret Society'', pp.201-202.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid.

<sup>623</sup> Richard Moore Colyer, 'Back to Basics: Rolf Gardiner, H. J. Massingham and 'A Kinship in Husbandry'' *Rural History* Vol. 12 No.1 (2002) pp.85-108) p.102.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid., p.103.

## Concluding Thoughts

This study has attempted to trace Lymington's evolution from young and upcoming landowning-conservative to a substantial presence in the British fascist landscape. In the first chapter we approached his time in parliament, we found that he was an active presence in and outside of the commons. We also found that during this time he developed a deep fear over the state of English agriculture and, alongside other diehards and concomitantly with those in English Mistery, developed a deep skepticism of British democracy and its capacity to fight the threats of Bolsheviks, 'aliens' and their detrimental effects on the land and English political and cultural life more broadly. Lymington also expressed anxiety over the strength of the British Empire and made his commitment to imperialism clear, expressing doubts over the propensity if the British state to defend its imperial borders.

The second chapter attempted an exposition of Lymington's journey through the Mistery and Array. The former provided an avenue through which Lymington could showcase a type of proto-fascism, and alongside figures like Ludovici and Sanderson make connections and develop a mystical, royalist, aristocratic revivalist English-ultranationalism. It also allowed Lymington to interact with the upper echelons of the fascist regime in Italy and a growing German Nazi party. The ideological repertoire of the group contained also the violent eugenic outlook of Anthony Ludovici, as well as a deeply racial focus lightly veiled behind the Mistery's romanticist cloak. We saw toward the end of the section on the Mistery how Sanderson and Lymington's relationship faded through antagonism, and that, most likely due to his increasing popularity, Lymington took the most influential characters with him, such as Ludovici.

The Array was Lymington's first opportunity to lead a sizeable political organization and imbue it, without resistance, with his own ideas. He refined the former constitution of the Mistery into a more cogent political plan that stressed an identifiably fascistic vision of English national regeneration, royalism, imperialism, and anti-Semitism. This was perhaps expressed most clearly through the Array's publication *The Quarterly Gazette of the English Array*, which when it approached continental politics found itself praising continental fascism and authoritarianism. This, coupled with Lymington's sympathetic words toward the BUF, indicated a shift for Lymington and the Array further into the British fascist landscape. Indeed, as we saw in the commentary within the *Quarterly Gazette*, as the geo-political scene intensified so did Lymington's anti-communism, fear over imperial interests and, finally, the 'white west'.

Lymington's ideological intensifications matched the increasing geo-political tensions of the late 1930s. These changes were cemented in the next chapter, a confirmation of Lymington's travels into the world of fascism. In

this chapter, which investigated Lymington's role as an ideologue and position in the appeasement movement, two main points were made. The first was that on top of other publications *Famine in England* elevated Lymington's position to a national level and proved to be a key point in Lymington's intellectual development. The contents of the book highlight more than any other of his texts Lymington's white supremacist, anti-Semitic and Nazi sympathizing ideals, which were co-constitutive with his existential fears of the health of the English and European white race and, too, his anti-communism.

The responses to the book indicate that not only were these ideas popular across multiple areas of British society, but that Lymington had positioned himself as a well sought after ideologue trading on said ideas. This position was compounded by the next half of the chapter, which sought to demonstrate that through the BCAEC and *The New Pioneer*, Lymington became more of a serious force in the fascist world than he ever had before. It is in this period that Lymington secures the ideological favor of some of Britain's most famous fascist minds such as Mosley, Arnold Leese, William Joyce, John Beckett and A. K. Chesterton.

The last chapter considered Lymington's wartime activities in the Kinship in Husbandry. While Lymington clearly leant more into his English ultra-nationalism in wartime than his pro-Nazi fascism, his mindset, as we saw, still struck those around him as fascistic. The group also remained aligned with previous eugenic ideals and Lymington's focus on the correct 'types', or, essentially, racial quality. It also provided an avenue for Lymington to continue his agriculturalism and farming, with the group attempting experiments and the general advancement of British agriculture. Indeed, the Kinship were an important presence in the organic milieu of the 1940s and did attract a substantial amount of attention. However, by the end of 1939 Lymington was deflated and disappointed with the progress of his political organisations, and by the time the Kinship emerged from wartime it had made little impact on the future of Britain. Lymington moved to Kenya soon after, and later returned to his ancestral home in Hampshire where he saw out the rest of his days.

In assessing Lymington as a historical actor and force, multiple points can be drawn from this study. Firstly, when considering inter-war British fascism, one must account for men like Lymington and his peers who, while they operated outside of the 'Mosleyite' brand of fascism, saw a substantial amount of traffic with it and themselves held considerable ideological sway. Indeed, as suggested at the beginning of this study, if one was to collate a number of British fascist ideologues of the inter-war period, as has been done by Macklin in the post-war period, Lymington's career could offer valuable insight into inter-war British fascism.<sup>625</sup> This would also aid in the

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<sup>625</sup> Macklin, *Failed Fuhrers*.

growing field of British fascist studies which focuses outside the well-trodden history of the BUF. Secondly, for Lymington, it was a loss of faith in the ability of English Conservatism to protect aspects of British life he valued, such as agriculture and empire, that led him to repudiate democracy and embrace a fascistic project of regeneration. It is important to emphasize, however, that this did not entail a loss of the ideals he held while a conservative or, indeed, the ideals that constituted his commitment to conservatism. Rather, Lymington's politics intensified, turning to a more explicitly fascistic, perhaps what some have called 'illiberal' racism, to fuel his palingenic project.<sup>626</sup> Consequently, we must be willing to engage with ideas of 'indigenous' or strictly 'English' fascisms, as Lymington, while identifiably fascistic, also considered himself first and foremost acting in the best interests of England and the British empire. Thirdly, throughout the entirety of Lymington's career, he remained in contact with those in powerful positions, the operators of state, while himself being open about not directly participating in its structures. Now, while there can be no suggestion Lymington himself held official power within the British state following his resignation from parliament, it can also not be suggested he was an irrelevant force. In fact, as seen throughout this work, his public stature and ideological influence only grew after 1934. While the state and those who participate in it are important in grasping the political development of British fascism, some of its most noticeable tributaries, like Lymington, saw other opportunities to further their cause, and thus the study of British fascism must also look beyond the state. Regardless of his role within the British state, there can be no doubt that Lymington was an important tributary to the historical development of British fascism.

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<sup>626</sup> Aurelien Mondon and Aaron Winter, *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far-Right Became Mainstream* (London: Verso, 2020).

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<sup>627</sup> Files beginning with '15M84' were gathered from Lymington's papers held at the Hampshire Record Office.

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