

Introduction by Thesis Supervisor

Thomas Pritchard was a true student of Victorian England. I first encountered him in my B.A. class on that subject. I subsequently supervised both his master's and doctoral research projects, in related fields. Sadly, he died shortly before he was able to complete the minor corrections required by his examiners prior to the award of his Ph.D. degree.

This submission represents the version that was submitted for examination in January 2022. Even in this slightly imperfect form, it constitutes a major, revisionist, contribution to historical scholarship. Thomas's work pointed to the inadequacies of both: the traditional, 'opportunistic', understanding of Disraeli's political career, demonstrating that he could not possibly have succeeded to the extent that he did if his peers had believed him wholly cynical in his motives; and the more recent, 'exotic', interpretation of the supposed, self-proclaimed, peculiarity of an 'Eastern Semite', convincingly arguing that no one, so conceived, could possibly have progressed far in the Victorian Conservative Party.

By contrast, Thomas identified, described and explained Disraeli's striking capacity for political collaboration, often with unlikely but nonetheless sympathetic allies, this as the key to our better understanding of his remarkable political career over nearly five decades. In that way, Thomas established an altogether more convincing, contextually grounded, and historically plausible, account of one of the most extraordinary political episodes in nineteenth-century British political history.

Thomas was due to present a paper entitled 'Benjamin Disraeli and the Art of Collaboration' to a major international historical conference, based upon a *precis* of this thesis, in January 2024, which was unfortunately held one week after his death.

I have confidence in Thomas's statement in the the work is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Both examiners agreed that the thesis should be deposited without their requested corrections needing to be made.

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