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covers salaries for actors, stagehands, designers, and stage managers, rental [of] sound and light equipment, theater rental and fees, managers' salaries, advertising costs, and many other smaller items. No wonder Broadway tickets are never cheap."

But why are the production costs so high? The unions, those of stagehands and of musicians in particular, get a lot of the blame. The stagehands' union requires each of the 36 Broadway theaters to have a permanent "house" carpenter, electrician, and property manager. They help set up scenery and conduct rehearsals, and then, when the show is running, appear only on payday—to collect a weekly salary of \$800–\$900. The musicians' union, meanwhile, insists that from nine to 22 musicians be assigned to each theater used for musicals, and that they all be employed even if the show needs only four. [The union in 1993 agreed to relax this rule in "special situations." The producers of *Smokey Joe's Café*, a musical which opened in March, have been allowed to pay only the seven musicians who actually play.]

Broadway producers typically must also pay theater owners five to six percent of the weekly gross, plus about \$40,000 a week for ushers, concession workers, janitors, and box office staff, plus a separate flat fee of as much as \$20,000 a week. "These sums have gone up enormously in recent decades," Allen says, "largely because ballooning real estate values have driven owners' taxes up."

All of this has consequences on stage. Producers now try to cut costs by reducing the cast, simplifying the scenery, or cutting a three-act play to two acts. "Their other way of staying afloat," Allen writes, "is to minimize risk: hence the push for reliable blockbusters and revivals."

Last season, at Christmas, only one Broadway production was not a musical: *An Inspector Calls*, a revival of a 1924 English play. And of the 17 musicals playing, seven were revivals, one was a reworking of old material, and seven had come to Broadway only after successful runs in London. "The economic problem has become an aesthetic one as well," says playwright Arthur Miller. "My early play, *The*

*Crucible*, would never be produced on Broadway today—too expensive." The ultimate comment may be that Broadway productions of Shakespeare are now all but impossible.

"With any luck," Allen writes, "noncommercial theatrical ventures as well as the popular, mainstream pieces that no longer thrive on Broadway will continue to find a home—albeit a smaller and less glamorous one—off-Broadway." But off-Broadway can never be the major cultural force that Broadway was in its heyday 40 years ago. That Broadway, she laments, is now gone, apparently forever.

## *The Revenge of the Eminent Victorians*

"Eminent Victorianism: What Lytton Strachey Hath Wrought" by Richard D. Altick, in *The American Scholar* (Winter 1995), Phi Beta Kappa Society, 1811 Q St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009.

With *Eminent Victorians* (1918), biographer and critic Lytton Strachey did what no one else, before or since, has done, writes Altick, an emeritus professor of English at Ohio State University. With a single 350-page book, Strachey "turned an entire past society into a laughingstock in the estimation of a new one." Not quite eight decades later, however, it appears that the last laugh is on Strachey.

*Eminent Victorians* cruelly profiled four Victorian worthies: Roman Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning; Florence Nightingale, an idolized humanitarian; Thomas Arnold of Rugby, an education reformer, and General Charles "Chinese" Gordon, a national hero for his exploits in China and his ill-fated defense of Khartoum. In the developing climate of cynicism after World War I, Strachey treated his subjects with indiscriminate ridicule, Altick notes. He portrayed Manning as an obsessive ecclesiastical opportunist, the redoubtable Nightingale as a workaholic driven by ruthless devotion to duty, Arnold as a zealous, pompous public-school headmaster who tended to confuse himself with God, and Gordon as a religious fanatic and dipsomaniac, alternating between Bible and brandy bottle."

Strachey (1880–1932) insisted that he only sought to tell the truth about his subjects and claimed to have done a great deal of research. In reality, Altick says, he relied heavily on the “standard” biographies, and used them “with great license, selecting and tampering with the data to conform to his fixed idea of his subject and going so far as to suppress contrary evidence and falsify quotations.”

Nevertheless, Strachey’s “boldly innovative book” made a big splash, Altick says. It ushered in “the jazz age biography,” fizzing with colorful personal details, imagined scenes, purported psychological insights derived from letters or thin air, and illusive intimacy, as when one biographer of Matthew Arnold called that exponent of high seriousness ‘Matt’ from cradle to grave.” *Eminent Victorians* and the hundreds of imitations that followed touched off a debate about biography that continues to this day. It is a debate over what balance must be struck between what the biographer owes to the memory of the subject and the subject’s survivors and his duty to his readers, over the balance between the recital of fact and artistic effect.

Yet *Eminent Victorians*

When Max Beerbohm did this 1929 caricature of Lytton Strachey, he called him “The Prince of Prose-Writers.”



itself has not worn well. “As a literary work,” Altick says, “it is almost unreadable, except as a curiosity. One is struck not by Strachey’s once admired urbanity and elegance but by his pose as a middle-aged enfant terrible, his obsession with meretricious effects, and his astonishing predilection for clichés.”

More important, Altick writes, the stereotype that Strachey so firmly attached to the Victorians—that they were “stupid . . . parochial, philistine, complacent, prudish” people—has been largely overturned by scholars (although traces of it still persist, even among them). The very fact that a decade ago, former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher could invoke “Victorian values” as a remedy for current woes showed “how radically the image of the Victorians has been altered.” Today, Altick concludes, it is *Eminent Victorians*, not Victorian civilization, that stands discredited.

## Getting Real in Children’s Literature

“Reading for Profit and Pleasure: *Little Women* and *The Story of a Bad Boy*” by Ellen Butler Donovan, in *The Lion and the Unicorn* (Dec. 1994), Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, Journals Division, 2715 N. Charles St., Baltimore, Md. 21218–4319.

Generations of young people have enjoyed the adventures of the March sisters in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868–69). But readers today may not realize how much of a radical departure in children’s literature this classic—along with its lesser-known contemporary, Thomas Bailey Aldrich’s *The Story of a Bad Boy*—represented. The two books, contends Donovan, of Middle Tennessee State University, were the first for children to offer more-realistic characters and a world not tightly controlled by adults.

Before *Little Women* and *Bad Boy* (first published in serial form in 1869), children’s fiction aimed mainly to teach moral or religious lessons, Donovan says. The child characters served as examples of either good or bad behavior, and adult paragons of virtue were in-