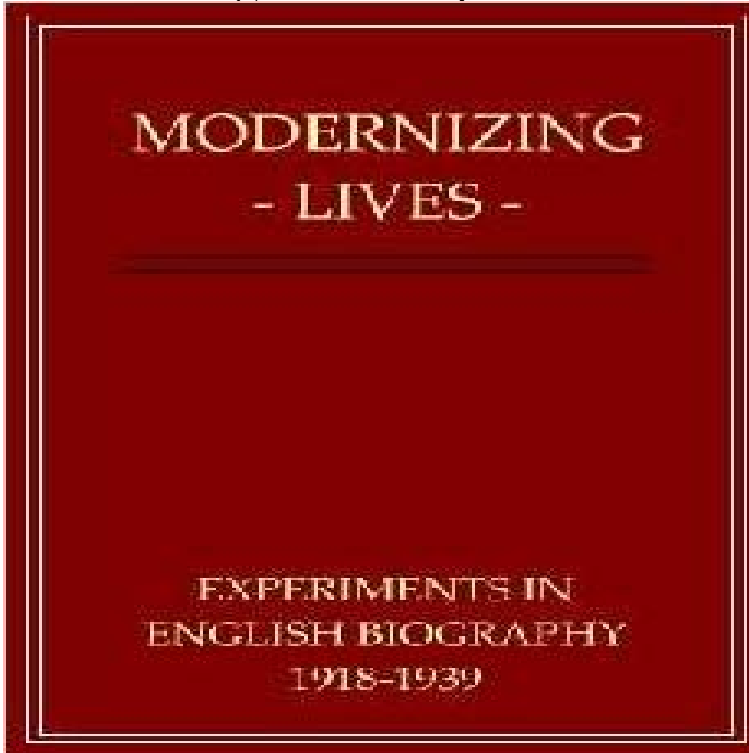


## Modernizing Lives: Experiments in English Biography 1918-1939



Eight distinguished English writers Lytton Strachey, Geoffrey Scott, David Cecil, Percy Lubbock, A. J. A. Symons, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, and Harold Nicolson all wrote biographies of great influence. Hoberman suggests that it is time to re-examine these people and their contribution to biography. The biographers featured in this study were vastly different writers writing about people as diverse as Queen Elizabeth and Roger Fry, but they shared a common concern: the reshaping of traditional biography into a more flexible, more artful form, able to accommodate modern ideas of self, of time, and of narration. These lives, written between the wars, no longer have the serious, joyless, depressing similarity that Virginia Woolf complained about in Victorian biographies. Between the wars a number of discoveries, general currents, personalities, and theories made traditional biography seem inadequate. No longer was the compilation of letters and autobiographical fragments enough. Childhood became important, as did the unconscious, unwilling element in character. Social forces became paramount.

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