Introduction

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This volume is the culmination of a project begun in the sixty-first year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth and Queen Regnant of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as well as several Caribbean countries, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. Among the many public celebrations that marked that Diamond Jubilee year, the Queen opened the 2012 Summer Olympics in partnership with the current James Bond. As BBC viewers looked on, Daniel Craig's 007 arrived at Buckingham Palace and briskly climbed the stairs to the Queen's private receiving room, where she worked at her desk in a dress of pink velvet. From there, trailed by two faithful corgis, he escorted her to a waiting helicopter that glided above Big Ben, St Paul's and the Tower of London to the illuminated Olympic stadium, into which the MI6 agent and his monarch, signature handbag on arm, duly parachuted to the surf-rock riffs of the James Bond theme.

The collaboration of the longest-reigning British sovereign with one of the longest-running film series in history raises issues that will be considered in this study. Central to them is the continuing role of royal representation in film and television as patriotic signifier and entertainment commodity. What political meanings – of Crown and Parliament, Empire and Commonwealth, sovereign and subject – do these moving images convey? How are these meanings assimilated to the commercial significance of royalty? Or indeed to the commercial imperatives of the media industries that portray them?

If, as many commentators and the British Council itself maintain, the Olympic opening ceremony was a triumphant celebration of the nation's cultural influence, what relation does this 'soft power'¹ have to the harder version personified by the muscular Bond? What connection does this charmingly self-mocking monarch have with the purviews of British intelligence, or indeed

1 Elizabeth II is escorted to the 2012 London Olympics by James Bond (Daniel Craig), as filmed for the BBC by Danny Boyle.

the other institutions represented by the London landmarks over which her helicopter flew – parliament, the established church, and the punitive power of the state? How have film and television, British and international, masked or made manifest the political power of the British monarchy?

In what way is the significance of that institution inflected by the key genres – action adventure, costume drama, the ‘biopic’ and melodrama – with which it is portrayed in fiction film? How do these understandings shift with the international production and consumption of such fictions? What connections are drawn between royal celebrity and movie stardom? How is the deference with which the British royal family has historically been portrayed in its national media affected by the greater informality of contemporary social relations – or indeed by their own intermarriage with their social subordinates? Do the richly brocaded broadcasts of royalty on state occasions contradict their more critical coverage in history documentaries and current affairs programmes? What happens when the spectators enter the ceremonial scene?

Happy and Glorious, as Danny Boyle’s dramatisation of the Queen’s arrival at the Olympic stadium is titled, is only one example of the countless screen

appearances of this particular monarch on television, in cinema newsreels and in her more recent portrayals in feature films. A superstar in her own right, Elizabeth II has reigned for over half of the entire history of the cinema, as was pointed out on her Jubilee visit to the British Film Institute. The screening for her at the BFI predictably included excerpts from British classics such as *Lawrence of Arabia* and popular comedies like *Carry On Camping*, but also scenes from the royal home movies in the Institute's archive, reaching backward from footage of the Queen as a young mother holding Prince Charles in 1949 to film of her great-great-grandmother Victoria in 1896.

Moving images of the British monarchy, in fact and fiction, are almost as old as the moving image itself. In 1895 the Edison Manufacturing Company released an eighteen-second Kinetoscope film titled *The Execution of Mary Stuart*. Directed by Alfred Clark, it may be the first film with trained actors and one of the first to use editing for special effects. In this dramatic vignette, the blindfolded Queen of Scots (played by an uncredited actress) is led past a contingent of armed guards to kneel with her neck on the block. Watched by two women attendants, the executioner (Robert Thomae) raises his axe, brings it down and then holds the severed head aloft. The shocking decapitation was created by stopping the camera, replacing the actress with a mannequin and cranking it up again.

One year later a living monarch, Queen Victoria, was filmed at Balmoral riding in an open chaise attended by a Highlander. The Queen's last years were repeatedly filmed, whether in a procession to the May 1897 opening of Sheffield's Town Hall, or in a much grander parade through the streets of London to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee a month later. By her death in January 1901, the commercial value of royal 'actualities' had become apparent, and several film companies took up positions on the route of her funeral cortège, along which Victoria's crowned coffin was borne on a gun carriage. From these early examples alone, it is easy to perceive the appeal of royal movies – costumes, carriages and national celebration vie with martial display, violence and, as we shall see, romance. And, not incidentally, the prominence of Britain's queens, from the Celtic Boudicca (played by Alex Kingston in 2003) to Elizabeth II (played by Helen Mirren in 2006), offers plentiful leading roles to women as representatives of an institution deemed to have become increasingly feminised. Long before the 2012 legislation ending male primogeniture in the royal succession, the longevity of Victoria and Elizabeth II, the idealisation of the maternal wife and her influence and the presumed amenability of

women contributed to this feminisation, and to the potential ‘depoliticisation’ of the royal role.² It also provided rich narrative opportunities for royal screen fictions in the genres of romance, costume drama and melodrama, with their ready-made female following.

The reign of the current British monarch is as foundational to the history of television as that of her great-great-grandmother Victoria is to the cinema. The 1953 coronation is famously cited as a milestone in the adoption of the new medium, doubling the number of UK TV licence holders as Britons bought sets for the first time in order that they and their neighbours could watch it. (Some 20 million did so, as well as the 100 million North Americans who viewed a recording of the ceremony in the days before satellite transmission.) Other blockbusters in royal broadcasting would follow, including the 1981 marriage of Prince Charles to Lady Diana Spencer (750 million viewers worldwide) and Diana’s funeral sixteen years later (2.5 billion). In addition to Stephen Frears’s Oscar-winning 2006 drama of the week of that funeral, *The Queen*, this ill-fated relationship prompted a remarkable number of US television biopics, including *Charles and Diana: A Royal Love Story* (1981), *The Royal Romance of Charles and Diana* (1981), *Charles and Diana: Unhappily Ever After* (1992), *The Women of Windsor* (1992), *Diana: Her True Story* (1993), *Princess in Love* (1996), *Charles and Camilla: Whatever Love Means* (2005) and *Last Days of a Princess* (2007).³

As a depiction of the life of a named historical person, the biopic is one of the venerable forms of film and television drama, and an obvious genre for royal representation. Often based on popular biography, this generic designation overlaps that of historical fiction more generally and costume drama less historically. Yet the plethora of US-made biopics about Charles and Diana exposes the comparative reluctance of British producers to portray living members of the royal family in dramatic works until recently. As John Snelson observes, any such depiction of a living monarch was ‘unthinkable’ at the time of Elizabeth II’s coronation, and it took a further fifty-three years for Frears’s film to make history as the first full-length cinematic representation of a reigning British sovereign.⁴

The numerous film adaptations of Shakespeare’s histories and those of later royal dramatists such as Friedrich Schiller, whose 1800 play *Mary Stuart* provided a precedent for the Edison short as well as Katherine Hepburn’s *Mary of Scotland* (1936) and Vanessa Redgrave’s *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1971), suggest the range of generic possibilities for such portrayals. When fictionalised accounts of British monarchs emphasise the painful struggle between public duty and

personal desire, they enter the terrain of melodrama, with its focus on the intimate life of a suffering individual. As this collection will demonstrate, all these genres have been plundered for royal representation, both in film and television fiction, in single and series form. Indeed, the media representation of the British royal family's crises and celebrations, as successive generations pass through birth, childhood, courtship, marriage, procreation and death, has long been described, in the term originally used for serial dramas sponsored by manufacturers of household cleansers, as soap opera.

When Malcolm Muggeridge denounced the 'orgy of vulgar and sentimental speculation' over Princess Margaret's relationship with a divorced Royal Air Force officer as a 'royal soap opera' in 1955,⁵ he failed to consider the success of the narrative form he was invoking. By that date, the cinema had already produced a lengthy roster of melodramatic British monarchs, beginning with Sarah Bernhardt's *Queen Elizabeth* (*Les Amours de la Reine Elisabeth*) in 1912 and given the Hollywood treatment with Bette Davis's two portrayals of the same Queen in 1939 and 1955. The theme, in these and similar pictures, was the suffering of a royal woman torn between romantic fulfilment and official obligation, a box-office formula that persists in films such as 1997's *Mrs. Brown*. Moreover, in comparing 'the running serial' of tabloid coverage of controversial romances like Margaret's and that of her abdicating uncle Edward VIII to *The Archers*, Muggeridge underestimated the longevity of both. Today the BBC radio serial and the British monarchy are more popular than ever. Unlike the feature melodrama, which comes, however ambiguously, to a conclusion, the soap opera can go on and on. And thus it has readily contributed to the identification of the Crown's continuity with that of the nation, as endorsed by the writer himself.

VICTORIAN INVENTIONS

Malcolm Muggeridge suspected that the royal family had developed 'a taste for the publicity which, in theory, they find so repugnant',⁶ but this again was no new phenomenon. As Ian Christie recounts in this collection, Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert were not only early enthusiasts of photography but their own family archivists, installing a darkroom in Windsor Castle and having their nine children schooled in the medium. In addition to the albums compiled by the family, the royal parents and their offspring had their portraits taken by professionals such as the famed Crimean War photographer Roger Fenton. For her Diamond Jubilee in 1897, Victoria chose a photograph by

William Ernest Downey as her official portrait and encouraged its wide circulation without copyright control, so long as the Downey studio was credited. A decade later her daughter-in-law Queen Alexandra, wife of Edward VII, would publish a *Christmas Gift Book* of family photographs, the proceeds going to charity.

This interest in photography extended to the moving image, with British cinematographer Birt Acres following up his 1895 film of the Queen's grandson Kaiser Wilhelm with an 1896 study of the Prince and Princess of Wales opening the Cardiff Exhibition. A few months later Victoria herself agreed to be filmed at Balmoral by J. Downey, son of William Ernest. The *Lady's Pictorial* later reported that the resulting vignette, together with lantern slides of royal photographs and Robert Paul's film of the Prince of Wales's horse winning the Derby, were exhibited at Windsor to the delighted Queen and her household on 23 November 1896. If Downey's 'animated photographs' of the monarch were intended for private consumption, they were soon followed by royal films designed for the public. At the initiative of Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, Victoria's June 1897 Diamond Jubilee procession was staged as a spectacle of imperial splendour of and for her (inter)national subjects, marching in the massed ranks of the colonial troops, watching in person on the streets of London or later in the new film theatres of Belfast and Melbourne and Quebec. Nor were Victoria's family unwilling to exhibit their social life on screen. The summer of 1897 saw the filming of three generations of them at *Afternoon Tea in the Gardens of Clarence House*, followed in 1900 by the very popular *Children of the Royal Family of England* showing the future Edward VIII 'at play' with his young siblings.

Victoria was not only the first British monarch to be filmed; her reign became talismanic for producers eager to invoke its power and prosperity as the Empire was threatened with war, rebellion and economic collapse. On the eve of the Great War, G. B. Samuelson's *Sixty Years a Queen* celebrated *The Life and Times of Queen Victoria* in an exceptionally expensive epic of nearly two hours' length, now lost except for a 46-foot fragment depicting the moment in which the young Princess is told that she will become Queen. Recreating it through the surviving press-book's scene list and production stills, a tie-in biography and the trade papers, Jude Cowan Montague describes the painstaking production and ecstatic reception of this 'great patriotic film'. Casting three actresses to represent the Queen from youth to old age, *Sixty Years a Queen* employed the infrastructure and techniques of theatrical history dramas as well as their tableau

style. Events as varied as the monarch's proposal to Albert, the annexation of British Columbia, the Indian Mutiny and a visit of 'Victoria the Good' to the military hospital she had established in Hampshire were carefully researched and designed using illustrations from the weekly pictorials. Authenticity became the watchword of films about this royal personage, not least in this case because some of its spectators had lived through the events represented. But authenticity did not rule out hagiography, and the Queen was portrayed as a saintly, if well-dressed, head of a national community reconsecrated by viewing the film.

The production of films about Victoria did not abate with the deaths of those who remembered her. On the contrary, as Steven Fielding points out in this volume, she has persisted as the central protagonist of features stretching to the 2009 *The Young Victoria*. Acknowledging a 2012 British survey whose respondents believed that the current Queen was more concerned about their problems than were their elected representatives, Fielding reads her predecessor's biopics in the light of 'an idea almost as old as history' recorded by George Orwell, that the monarch and the common people share 'a sort of alliance against the upper classes'.⁷ After a hiatus enforced by George V's prohibition of filmed portrayals of his grandmother, British producer-director Herbert Wilcox released *Victoria the Great* in 1937, the year of the coronation of George VI and the centennial of Victoria's own accession to the throne. So successful was this picture that Wilcox immediately followed it with *Sixty Glorious Years* in 1938. Both films star the producer's wife Anna Neagle and Anton Walbrook as a romantic royal couple, and both emphasise the Queen's concern for the well-being of her subjects in the face of her dilatory, bellicose or uncaring prime ministers. Even the Queen's favourite, Benjamin Disraeli, is shown opposing the repeal of the Corn Laws before embracing the beneficent Victorian agenda in the 1930s films. (In a notable exception, their postwar sequel *The Mudlark* (1950), it is the Prime Minister who convinces the mourning monarch to end her seclusion and join him in social reform.) As Fielding observes, recent Victorian films have been even more negative in their evocation of the country's political leadership, with *Mrs. Brown* (1997) portraying Disraeli as a cynical manipulator of his grieving sovereign and *The Young Victoria* drawing implicit parallels between the reforming Queen's struggles with a recalcitrant Lord Melbourne and Princess Diana's with an unsympathetic male establishment. Both regal characterisations, of the distraught older monarch (played by Judi Dench) and the idealistic *ingénue* (Emily Blunt), invite an identification that disavows the immense distance between the sovereign and her subjects.

In a rare discussion of the actor made famous by his casting as Prince Albert, James Downs compares the Viennese actor Anton Walbrook's ambiguous relation with his adopted country to that of Albert himself. Originally trained as a classical actor, the then Adolf Wohlbrück played sophisticated heroes in popular German films, anticipating his royal role in the 1933 musical *Walzerkrieg* by portraying composer Johann Strauss on a visit to Victoria's court. But his screen success could not withstand the dangers posed by his homosexuality and Jewish ancestry as the Nazification of the German film industry proceeded, and he seized the opportunity of an RKO contract to work in Hollywood. While he was filming there in 1936, the British ban on dramas about Victoria was lifted and rival producers began to plan films of her life. When Wilcox prevailed, Walbrook's resemblance to Prince Albert brought him to England early in 1937.

The question of resemblance was crucial in a period in which the Windsors' reticence about filming their forebears was only beginning to relax. Wilcox's team sought the royal household's advice on Victorian architecture and costume to render their production a faithful record, but the vogue for the Viennese waltz film required the movie couple to perform a dance that would have been impossibly intimate for the real Queen. The resulting hybrid of period detail and popular convention proved a huge success, with Walbrook's rendition of an intelligent and ironic Prince judged brilliant. In the 1937 *Victoria the Great* Albert confronts accusations of spying for Germany, but with war approaching, the film's sequel, *Sixty Glorious Years*, omits even its predecessor's reference to Victoria's German-speaking childhood. Only a few months later, as a German national, Walbrook himself would have his radio and car confiscated when war was declared. The origins that had supported his casting as Prince Albert consigned him to similar suspicions of disloyalty long before his burial in England as the ultimately beloved performer of his royal role.

THE ELIZABETHAN DIVA

Film portraits of Victoria follow the lead of the Queen herself in emphasising the happiness and stability of the royal *family*. 'A family on the throne is an interesting idea', the nineteenth-century political journalist Walter Bagehot enthused, comparing its popular appeal to the dull machinations of little-known parliamentarians.⁸ But the family values espoused in the Victorian canon are a world away from the themes explored in films portraying her greatest screen rival, Elizabeth I. Unencumbered by the reserved image of an English gentlewoman,

the Virgin Queen enters the cinema as the diva of royal representation – magnificent, passionate, singular. Fittingly, her most notable early film incarnation is by Sarah Bernhardt, then the world's most famous actress, if something of an intruder in the cinema. In 1912 Bernhardt revived her stage failure *Queen Elizabeth* in a multiple-reel feature in which the stricken Queen dies of remorse after executing the man she loves. On the heels of her highly successful screen version of *La Dame aux camélias*, it too became an international success, drawing other theatre stars to the cinema and helping to inaugurate the longer-playing narrative film. Yet scholars and historians have long denounced *Queen Elizabeth* as anachronistic and stagey, proof of its star's inability to engage with film. Reconsidering the much-denigrated theatricality of this melodrama, Victoria Duckett praises the spectacular appeal of its pictorial composition, expressive gestures and capacity to animate the static pose. Not for the last time, the regal role is seen to confirm the star performer's own majesty.

In establishing her political power, the real-life Elizabeth made exceptionally effective use of her public self-display in rich apparel, stately 'progresses' through her realm and commissioned portraits, so becoming an iconic figure. Monarchy, in Ernst Kantorowicz's influential theory of medieval and early modern culture, exists in the sovereign's natural body and persists in the body political, guaranteeing the institution's immortality.⁹ As a female monarch, Elizabeth I was constituted by a normatively masculine symbolic body and a feminine natural one, a duality that is also marked in the relations of gender to power in her cinematic representation. Addressing the conflict between private person and public persona particular to female sovereignty, Elisabeth Bronfen and Barbara Straumann explore the diverse enactments of the Queen by four film stars (Flora Robson, Bette Davis, Jean Simmons and Cate Blanchett) in eras of impending war, ambivalent domesticity and political spin-doctoring. As the Queen's two bodies bring together her physical being and her symbolic mandate, the mediality of this screened embodiment becomes conspicuously foregrounded.

In 1992, Quentin Crisp appeared on cinema screens as Elizabeth I in Sally Potter's adaptation of Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*; the following year he provided the 'Alternative Queen's Message' on Britain's Channel 4 television on Christmas Day, in direct competition with Elizabeth II's own holiday address. The late 1980s and early 1990s had heralded a shift away from the lesbian and gay politics that had arisen in the 1970s towards a more confrontational queer activism. With it came a 'new queer cinema' which transgressed received history in a

pointedly artificial *mise-en-scène* (Isaac Julien's 1989 *Looking for Langston*, Derek Jarman's 1991 *Edward II*, Tom Kalin's 1992 *Swoon*). *Orlando* can be seen as a prime example of queer cinema, given its play with gender and sexuality and the choice of Jarman collaborator Tilda Swinton for the title role. In casting the arch-diva Crisp as the quintessence of queenliness, Potter's film takes its lead from Woolf's novel, a fictional biography whose hero turns into a heroine. But as Glyn Davis points out, the film's *lèse-majesté* can also be traced back to Woolf's ambivalent musings about monarchy in her other writings, which both marvel at and ridicule the custom of 'bowing and curtsying to people who are just like ourselves'.¹⁰

IMAGES OF EMPIRE

Remarking in her diary on the shock caused by the revelation that Edward VIII was considering abdication in order to marry a twice-divorced American socialite, Virginia Woolf noted the widespread view that if royalty was in peril, 'empires, hierarchies – moralities – will never be the same again'.¹¹ But both royalty and imperial loyalty have persisted long beyond the 1936 abdication crisis, sustained by the ties of the Commonwealth of Nations and the geopolitical forces that this organisation of former British territories represents. Founded as decolonisation and the Cold War took hold in 1949, its head continues to be the British monarch, who is also monarch of sixteen of its member states, including Australia. Where her namesake consolidated her hold on the crown with her spectacular progresses through England, the modern Elizabeth's periodic tours of the Commonwealth, together with those of her royal relations, have also been politically purposeful, calculated to strengthen economic and military alliances. Exploring a much-heralded colour film of one such visit, *The Queen in Australia* (1954), Jane Landman considers the dramaturgy with which the Griersonian documentarist Stanley Hawes renders the first visit to Australia by a ruling monarch, the climax of the 1953–54 Royal Tour of the Pacific. Shooting 60,000 feet of film on a tour of 10,000 miles, Hawes crafted an explicit assertion of settler colonialism – 'a new nation, flexing its muscles, filling its spaces, inheriting its own'. Arriving as Queen of the 'free world', the regal young mother is an ideal representative of both renewal and tradition. Her happy family – white crowds climbing trees to catch sight of the sovereign, white flower girls presenting their tributes, and the occasional Indigenous dancer – are played by Australians in a striking performance of imaginary unity.

Fifty-six years later, both social hierarchy and imperial loyalty were confirmed in the highly successful dramatisation of Elizabeth's father, the soon-to-be George VI, and his treatment by Australian actor-turned-speech therapist Lionel Logue. *The King's Speech* (2010) takes the imperial story back to the abdication, which results in Prince Bertie's reluctant ascent to the throne. Opening with his agonised stammering at the British Empire Exhibition of 1925 and closing at the declaration of war in 1939 with a BBC radio address to his imperial subjects, the film portrays the healing of the monarchy by its loyal, if impermanent, colonial vassal. As Deidre Gilfedder observes, *The King's Speech* follows the Shakespearean tradition of the 'trusted fool' as the irrepressible Logue (Geoffrey Rush) insists on equality with his royal patient (Colin Firth) in seeking to cure his stammer. This dose of democracy propels the stuffy sovereign into modernity, enabling him to meet the new media demands of monarchy and speak into the microphone. An all-purpose therapist, drama coach and spin doctor, Logue effectively ushers Britain's last emperor into the less deferential, but still stratified, world of the film's spectators, where in 2014 the Australian government reintroduced the titles of Knight and Dame. Commenting on the film's challenge to republicanism, the English journalist Jonathan Freedland has argued that the concluding emphasis on the Second World War confirms that it 'has now become our nation's defining narrative, almost its creation myth', with the briefly seen Princess Elizabeth 'the last public figure anywhere in the world with a genuine tie' to it and her royal descendants 'Kate and Wills' now on first-name terms with the far-flung denizens of the former Empire.¹²

POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN ROYAL REPRESENTATION

The dramatic and documentary films so far described are designed for the dynamics of traditional cinematic spectatorship, with the (on- and off-screen) commoner as onlooker and the monarch as the object of the gaze. But this relationship has been modified in other modes of screen representation, enabling the spectator to enter the scene. As Karen Lury demonstrates, the Scottish amateur film archive offers fascinating examples of this process, with home movies of royal visits accidentally breaching the fourth wall between the royal entourage and the crowd to capture the smoking, chatting, fidgeting spectators themselves. Analysing amateur films from 1932 and 1952, she observes the way they expose the clumsy choreography of such visits and the fragile formality of the monarch's performance. The recurring figure of the child is central to Lury's

analysis. In royal visit films, the little girl who proffers her posy is a figure of social inferiority, an inferiority that conveniently can be attributed to her status as a child rather than as a member of a subordinate population. But in another type of amateur film, those in which schoolchildren parade as make-believe queens, they are the intended spectacle, together with the crowd who watch them. Dressed in a fanciful approximation of ceremonial robes, they proceed in awkward imitation of regal poise and again reveal its performative character. However loyal in intention, these amateur films insidiously expose the illusory nature of royal superiority.

Where the children in amateur films copy the monarch in homemade costumes, this mimetic impulse has long been commercialised in the fashion industry's mass production of royal couture. Paramount in this process is the royal wedding, in Bagehot's famous description, 'the brilliant edition of a universal fact'. Reflecting on its screen history, Jo Stephenson traces the orchestrated anticipation of the bridal gown back to a British Pathé newsreel of the 1935 wedding of Prince Henry to Lady Alice Scott. Employing the present-tense narration later adopted for live broadcast, the commentator excitedly describes the wait for the bride and the international rejoicing at the marriage. Another Pathé film supplements this coverage by showing a mannequin modelling Lady Alice's honeymoon trousseau and naming its designer, royal couturier Norman Hartnell. The 1947 wedding of Princess Elizabeth was preceded by weeks of publicity about her Hartnell dress, taking in the rationing coupons required for its Essex-spun silk fabric. On the day of the ceremony replicas were ready for sale in the US. Two generations later, in addition to her much-acclaimed Alexander McQueen wedding gown, Catherine Middleton appeared in high-street dresses that had only to be worn to sell out. As Stephenson concludes, this democratisation of royal fashion is central to both its political and financial impact, sustaining the appeal of an apparently accessible national institution while promoting a national industry.

If by donning these clothes the public seek to join in the royal spectacle, this impulse is even more evident in the remarkable popularity of ceremonial broadcasts on giant outdoor screens. Despite the ubiquity of domestic TV, thousands chose to watch the 2011 royal wedding in Hyde Park and Trafalgar Square and an estimated million congregated to view the Golden Jubilee concert on screens along the Mall. Here the traditional norms of home viewing gave way to those of active social participation, in which the audience became a considerable part of the spectacle. This was evident in the news broadcasts

after Diana's death in 1997, when the mourners who brought their tributes to the Palace were the whole show until the Queen belatedly arrived.¹³ Similarly, during Diana's funeral, it was the applause of the crowds viewing it on the big screen outside that prompted the very unconventional clapping within the Abbey. Canvassing the experiences of interviewees who had joined the *al fresco* audiences for the wedding of Diana's son in 2011 and his grandmother's Jubilee celebrations a year later, Ruth Adams explores how these public viewings created a co-presence with the events screened, via the spectators' co-presence with one another and the images of that presence included within the live broadcast. The reported result was a profound sense of being 'part of history'. Instead of the potentially destabilising performance of royalty afforded by imitative dress, the participatory dynamic was an immersive experience of the real time and screen space of the royal ceremony, in the process legitimating its public significance.

TELEVISION'S CONTESTED HISTORIES

Echoing the claim that state ceremonial elevates the prestige of British royalty even as that of Britain declines, David Cannadine maintained in 1978 that while the nation's 'television has cut politicians down to size, so that the grand manner in parliament or Whitehall is no longer effective, it has continued to adopt the same reverential attitude toward the monarchy which radio pioneered in the days of Reith'.¹⁴ In response to the criticism of the BBC's populist coverage of the Jubilee celebrations thirty-four years later, Erin Bell and Ann Gray consider the current affairs and history programmes that framed these events in the years 2007–13. Comparing those broadcast by the BBC and Channel 4, they measure the differences in historical emphasis and interpretation generated by the two very different British channels. Three issues discussed in them illustrate the variation in their approaches to the past and future of the monarchy – Prince Charles's adultery with Camilla Parker-Bowles, Catherine Middleton's working-class ancestry and the possible abdication of the ageing Queen or her heir. Effectively interrogating the moral exemplarity, social superiority and future competence of the royal family, these programmes and their associated websites offer perspectives that cannot be described as 'reverential', however cautious their articulation. Whether they outweigh the iconic power of the broadcast ceremonials in which these individuals star is a different question.

With the relaxation of censorship in the era of cable, boxed sets and streamed television, historical drama has escaped the confines of family-centred broadcasting.

The graphic depiction of sex and violence in series such as *Rome* and *The Borgias* flouts the high-mindedness, as well as the factual pretensions, of previous historical dramas. In the case of Britain's most filmed king, the private life of Henry VIII provided *The Tudors* (Showtime, 2007–10) with a loose pretext for a dramatic update in screen persona, exchanging the ageing fatty in the feathered hat for a punk potentate with pectorals. Chronicling the long history of Henry films, Basil Glynn charts the international appeal of an English monarch impervious to the English virtue of 'fair play'. *The Tudors'* abiding allure of murder and multiple marriages, as enacted by a multi-national cast against a computer-generated background, attracted British and North American investment, as well as tax incentives provided by the Irish and Canadian governments. Discarding the expensive trappings of stage knights and castle locations, it was freed by writer-producer Michael Hirst to portray the Henry its audience wanted to see – a sadistic pop star working his way through a bevy of doomed damsels in an open-necked shirt. Post-national and post-historical as he undoubtedly is, this king upholds a tradition that has only intensified as British sovereigns have been subjected to screen mediation – one in which the monarchy and its moving image increasingly merge in a spectacle whose dominant meaning is the power of spectacle itself.

MONARCHY IN CONTEMPORARY ANGLOPHONE CINEMA

The 'heritage film' is less a generic category than a political accusation. Since the 1990s, many British-made period dramas have so been labelled to criticise the nostalgic travelogue of the imperial past that they are accused of propounding. Reflecting on the Thatcherite marketing of this fantasy history in tourism and the arts, Andrew Higson initially employed the term to characterise a cycle of 'quality' films with a late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century setting, conspicuous *mise-en-scène* and a concentration on a narrow band of privileged characters in picturesque locations.¹⁵ If that description fits *Chariots of Fire* or the Merchant-Ivory adaptations of the novels of E. M. Forster, it also fits many films featuring British monarchs. But as Higson has also observed, the style of these films is often at odds with their narratives, overwhelming them with decor or admitting the double registration of 'repression and feeling'¹⁶ characteristic of melodrama. This opens them to more complex analyses, and he has since elaborated his commentary on the heritage designation.

Turning in this volume to anglophone monarchy films made in the ensuing decades, Higson acknowledges their continuing role as profitable productions

of an imaginative construction of British national identity. Achieving this requires both the restatement of continuity between the past and present and the modernisation of the monarchy to make it relevant to contemporary concerns. In an increasingly transatlantic industry, films that depict Scottish and English kings and queens are often UK/US co-productions, working in a variety of genres. These can be roughly divided between the action adventure characteristic of representations of medieval monarchs in Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* (1995) or the *Robin Hood* films directed by Kevin Reynolds (1991) and Ridley Scott (2010); the costume dramas that typically display the ornamentalised rulers of Renaissance England in films like *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) and *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2008); and the dramas of late modern royal family life from *The Madness of King George* (1994) to *Hyde Park on Hudson* (2012). As Higson points out, this withdrawal from action to interiority reflects the reduction of royal power from warrior kingship to constitutional monarchy, from hard power to soft. In this reading the meaning of the Crown diminishes from physical force to visual splendour to model family. With the representation of the later royals, however, there is a necessary counterpoint, the faux-antique traditions largely instituted in Victoria's reign to distinguish the bourgeois sovereign from her subjects.¹⁷ Here recent films have also exploited the royal duality of symbolic performer and private person identified by Kantorowicz, but where representations of Tudor monarchs eroticise the royal body to match its public decoration, those of modern kings and queens emphasise their physical restraint.

The tension in these characters as feeling individuals and ceremonial figure-heads is the central theme of two highly successful melodramas. Both cast stars as monarchs, but they play down their glamour to emphasise George VI's and his daughter Elizabeth II's difficulties with their royal roles. *The Queen* depicts the fateful week after the death of Diana with actual as well as fabricated news footage and an intermittently documentary style. But, as Mandy Merck points out, despite its portrayal of real people and events, docudrama in this film is trumped by melodrama's pathos, appeal for moral recognition and highly expressive *mise-en-scène*. So doing *The Queen* became what David Thomson called 'the most sophisticated public relations boost HRH had had in 20 years'.¹⁸ In its opposition of the Queen of hearts to the Queen of the nation, the film echoes Friedrich Schiller's 1800 proto-melodrama *Mary Stuart*, with its own meditation on a sovereign confronted with a female rival and the fluctuating loyalties of her subjects. Two centuries later, melodrama renders the modern monarch more vivid and affecting than the much-mourned Princess. Much of this triumph can

be attributed to Helen Mirren, bringing her star persona to a monarch in danger of being overshadowed by the fame of her rival. In an unusually forthright discussion of royalty and celebrity, *The Queen* draws the two regimes of power together in a single figure, who finishes the film with a declamation on 'glamour and tears'. Accepting her Academy Award for this performance, the soon-to-be Dame Helen consolidated Hollywood's long complicity with the Crown in a recitation of the loyal toast: 'Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you the Queen.'

The King's Speech is paradigmatic of the contemporary representation of the British monarchy through a mode that traditionally sides with the powerless. As Nicola Rehling demonstrates, the Prince who becomes George VI (Colin Firth) is a melodramatic figure whose integrity is underscored, in Linda Williams's phrase, by 'the literal suffering of an agonized body'. His speech impediment embodies the psychic wounds caused by both the demands of royalty and his austere father. Like his nickname 'Bertie', his stammering renders him the object of popular identification, despite his self-confessed ignorance of his common subjects. Melodrama, in Peter Brooks's influential formulation, offers moral legibility in a secular era, but only in individualised terms. Bertie's hysterical symptoms confirm his virtue and that of the monarchy as institution via a relentless focus on the private realm, with the spectre of class antagonism and republican protest evoked only to be dismissed. The King's stammering speaks the burden of royalty, while also providing a vehicle for exploring the reterritorialisation of the public/private distinction in the wake of the new mass media. His final broadcast unites the nation, reinvigorating the national body ailing from his brother's abdication, triumphantly readying it for war.

Both films climax with their monarchs' speeches broadcast to the nation, a mediated assertion of the increasing importance of the mass media to royal authority. As royal biographer William Shawcross wrote of *The Queen's* portrayal of the monarch's reaction to the death of Diana in 1997, 'Since the film was released she has had many more letters, some of the writers saying that before the film they had never quite understood what she had been through, others saying how glad they were that the film had finally tried to tell the truth they had always accepted.'¹⁹ In the Olympic opening, the real Queen replaced Mirren in the fictional frame. Reportedly delivered in one take, her 'Good evening, Mr Bond' was a sly reference to the historical interchange between motion pictures and the Palace. For a reserved woman who had complained as a young princess of the harsh lighting of her photographers,²⁰ the Queen's embrace of movie bondage was an overdue acknowledgement

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of a *fait accompli*. Her model was of course ‘M’, Bond’s boss in the film series, played from 1995’s *Golden Eye* to the 2009 *Skyfall* by Judi Dench. In 1998 Dame Judi also played, in *Mrs. Brown*, the Queen’s great-great-grandmother Victoria, and in 1997 her namesake, Elizabeth I, in *Shakespeare in Love*. As Philip French wrote in his review of *Skyfall*, ‘M seems now a code letter for majesty.’²¹ Its literalisation three years later was an Olympian achievement of updated loyalty, media reflexivity and reciprocal product placement – in the tradition of British screen monarchs.

NOTES

- 1 See Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004); and John Holden assisted by Chris Tryhorn, *Influence and Attraction: Culture and the Race for Soft Power in the 21st Century* (London: British Council, 2013), www.britishcouncil.org/.../files/influence-and-attraction-report.pdf.
- 2 Andrzej Olechnowicz, ‘Historians and the modern British monarchy’, in Andrzej Olechnowicz (ed.), *The Monarchy and the British Nation, 1780 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 29–31.
- 3 See Giselle Bastin, ‘Filming the ineffable: biopics of the British royal family’, *Auto/Biography Studies* 24:1 (Summer 2009).
- 4 See John Snelson, ‘Royalty on stage: famous examples and struggles with royal censorship’, *Royal Opera House* (18 June 2013), www.roh.org.uk/famous-examples-and-struggles-with-censorship; and Mark Lawson, ‘One is ready for one’s close-up’, *Guardian* (8 September 2006), www.theguardian.com/film/2006/sep/08/3.
- 5 Malcolm Muggeridge, ‘The royal soap opera’, *New Statesman* (first published in the *New Statesman*, 22 October 1955), republished by the *New Statesman* (30 May 2012), www.newstatesman.com/lifestyle/2012/05/royal-soap-opera.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 George Orwell, ‘The English people’, in *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell*, vol. 3, *As I Please, 1943–1945*, ed. Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (London: Secker & Warburg, 1968), p. 17.
- 8 Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (1867) (London: Fontana Library, 1963), p. 85.
- 9 Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).
- 10 Virginia Woolf, ‘Royalty’ [1934], in Michèle Barrett (ed.), *Women and Writing* (New York: Harvest, 2003), p. 139.
- 11 Virginia Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, vol. 5, 1936–1941, ed. Anne Olivier Bell (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), pp. 12–13.
- 12 Jonathan Freedland, ‘The King’s Speech lays bare the sheer scale of the republican challenge’, *Guardian* (18 January 2011), www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/jan/18/kings-speech-republican-challenge-war-queen.

- 13 See Mandy Merck, 'Introduction', in Mandy Merck (ed.), *After Diana: Irreverent Elegies* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 7.
- 14 David Cannadine, 'The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British monarchy and the "invention of tradition", c. 1820–1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 158.
- 15 See Andrew Higson, 'Re-presenting the national past: nostalgia and pastiche in the heritage film', in Lester Friedman (ed.), *British Cinema and Thatcherism* (London: Routledge, 1993).
- 16 For a detailed commentary see Belén Vidal, *Heritage Film: Nation, Genre and Representation* (London: Wallflower, 2012), p. 19.
- 17 See Cannadine, 'The context, performance and meaning of ritual', pp. 101–64.
- 18 David Thomson, 'Biographical dictionary of film, number 99 (Stephen Frears)', *Guardian* (3 September 2010), p. 14.
- 19 William Shawcross, 'Portrait in majesty', *Vanity Fair* (June 2007), p. 106.
- 20 Ben Pimlott, 'Monarchy and the message', *Political Quarterly* 69:B (1998), p. 94.
- 21 Philip French, 'Skyfall', *Observer* (28 October 2012), www.theguardian.com/film/2012/oct/28/skyfall-james-bond-review.

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