‘A very wonderful process’: Queen Victoria, photography and film at the *fin de siècle*

Ian Christie

Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, celebrated in 1897, is generally agreed to have been the ceremonial climax to her reign, marking an unexpected return to public appearance after decades of self-imposed seclusion following the death of Prince Albert in 1861. Yet how much its impact owed to being the first major state event to be comprehensively filmed, with records of the procession being shown throughout Britain and the British Empire, as well as elsewhere, has hardly been assessed. Nor has the relationship between Victoria’s long-standing interest in photography, still very much in evidence at the time of the Jubilee, and her response to ‘animated photography’. While John Plunkett has argued convincingly for seeing Victoria as ‘media made’, his focus is primarily on ‘the tremendous expansion of the market for newspapers, books, periodicals and engravings’ that her reign witnessed.¹ And despite agreeing with Plunkett’s claim that ‘the royal image itself became photographic’, at least one of his critics has drawn attention to an apparent lack of agency in his portrayal of Victoria’s relationship to this process.²

My purpose here is not to adjudicate the degree of Victoria’s involvement in her photographic or filmic representation – especially in view of the limited and somewhat selective evidence available from royal archives. Rather, it is to connect the scattered fragments of evidence, in order to offer an account that does not underestimate Victoria’s active interest in the new photographic media, or create a false hiatus between still and moving pictures, while broadly agreeing with the many writers who have stressed how these reshaped the image of monarchy at the turn of the century.

A PASSION FOR PHOTOGRAPHY

In one of the most vivid accounts of Victoria’s involvement with photography, a pioneer historian of the medium, Bill Jay, claims that the Queen was viewing

the first specimens of the daguerreotype to reach England on the very occasion that she effectively proposed to Prince Albert: 15 October 1839.³ The story that Jay traces is one of a shared enthusiasm for the new medium in its earliest formats, with Albert photographed by daguerreotypist William Constable in Brighton in 1842 and Victoria by her former drawing master, Henry Collen, who had taken up the calotype negative-positive process invented by William Fox-Talbot, and produced a miniature portrait of her in 1844 or 1845.

By the early 1850s, Victoria and Albert were recognised patrons and practitioners of photography. A private darkroom had been established at Windsor Castle, and the royal couple were reported by the *Illustrated Magazine of Art* as 'well known to be no mean proficient in photography'.⁴ As patrons of the newly formed Photographic Society of London, they visited its first major exhibition in January 1853 and Victoria's journal entry reveals how engaged she was with the personalities and varieties of early photographic work:

It was most interesting & there are 3 rooms full of the most beautiful specimens, some, from France, and Germany, & many by amateurs. Mr Fenton, who belongs to the Society, explained everything & there were many beautiful photographs done by him. Profr Wheatstone, the inventor of stereoscope, was also there. Some of the landscapes were exquisite, & many admirable portraits. A set of photos of the animals at the Zoological Gardens by Don Juan, 2nd son of Don Carlos, are almost the finest of all the specimens.⁵

Roger Fenton, the Society's first Secretary, would soon become closely involved with the royal family, photographing their children in early 1854 and taking formal studies of the couple, including the well-known double portrait in court dress of 1854. Later that year, he left for the Crimea, apparently at the prompting of Prince Albert (if not the Queen herself) to photograph the war, in the hope that his record would counteract reports appearing in the press about the poor management of the war. Also significant is Victoria's recognition of the polymath Charles Wheatstone, Professor of 'Experimental Philosophy' at King's College London, inventor of the telegraph and much else, whose explanation of binocular vision in 1838 introduced stereoscopy.⁶ A commercial version of his stereoscope had been launched at the Great Exhibition in 1851, which was very much Albert's project, and the royal couple acquired their own early example of what would soon become a hugely popular instrument – although one often passed over in many histories of 'Victorian photography', in favour of the carte-de-visite craze of the 1860s.⁷ Likewise, Victoria's reference to Don Juan,

2 An early image from the royal collection: Queen Victoria with four of her children, photographed by Roger Fenton in February 1854.

son of the Carlist claimant to the Spanish throne and known as the Count of Montizón, indicates how widely photography was practised by the aristocracy by the 1850s.⁸

Victoria and Albert took steps to have their children given instruction in photography, with all the princes and princesses encouraged to use cameras and learn the still-complex 'wet' process.⁹ Prince Alfred took his equipment on a tour of South Africa in 1860 and was backed up by a professional photographer, Frederick York. Albert, the Prince of Wales (known as Bertie, and later Edward when he became King), also learned photography, and was accompanied on a tour of the Middle East in 1862 by another professional, Francis Bedford. All the princesses practised photography, and made up albums, like their parents, while Albert's wife, Princess Alexandra of Denmark, eventually exhibited her work, and published a *Christmas Gift Book* of family photographs in 1908 to aid charities.

Two major exhibitions have recorded the depth of Victoria and Albert's shared interest in photography: 'Victoria and Albert: Art & Love' (Queen's Gallery, 2010) included photographs among the other art they collected, while 'A Royal Passion: Queen Victoria and Photography' (Getty Center, 2014) focused on Victoria's lifelong preoccupation with the medium, as a family photographer

herself, a collector and also in her extensive use of photography to memorialise Albert after his death. Jay notes that:

Few days passed without Victoria sending for one volume [of photographs] or another, all of which were methodically catalogued with their contents arranged in systematic order. Photographs for these albums were commissioned, bought at auction, exchanged with related royal families abroad, or simply requested. The Queen even had a standing order with her favourite photographers for one print of every picture they made.

Even after Victoria's death, when Bertie undertook a draconian house-clearing exercise and 'thousands of loose photographs were burnt', what remained would illustrate 'the extent of the Royal passion for photography – over 100,000 photographs survived in 110 albums'.¹⁰

'Passion' is also used by Anne Lyden in the title of her Getty exhibition, and for once it seems to be deserved – this was far from a routine amassing of family photographs, even if many of the subjects were members of Victoria and Albert's extended family. It amounted to a serious and also passionately motivated collecting ambition. The technical-cum-aesthetic novelty that photography offered, which appealed to Victoria and Albert alike, led them to take a scientific interest in research to improve the fixing of the photographic image. (Jay cites Albert supporting several lines of inquiry into fading, and Victoria later 'having her most treasured prints copied by the stable carbon process'.)¹¹ After Albert's death, the multiplication of his image in a wide variety of photographic formats, on ceramic and enamel as well as in coloured prints, clearly served her mourning need, recalling one of the earliest drives that helped popularise photography.

But Lyden also cites another facet of Victoria's passion, which points towards a shrewd understanding of the power and status of the photographic image by the 1890s. In 1897, as the Diamond Jubilee approached, the Queen chose a photograph made some four years earlier and nominated it her 'official portrait', under specific conditions:

She has the copyright removed from the photograph. The only stipulation being that whoever reproduces the image has to credit the photographer by name. Well, you can imagine what this does; it means that her image is on everything from biscuit tins to tea towels.¹²

In his contribution to a 1997 television documentary on Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, David Cannadine insisted on her reluctance to take part in such

ceremonial, and also paints a portrait of the elderly Victoria retreating into a romanticised imperial fantasy, with exotic décor inspired by India created at her Isle of Wight residence Osborne House, and a fondness for 'native' servants. What this account ignores is the evidence of Victoria's almost encyclopaedic collecting, and her deliberate amassing of photographic evidence, beginning with the extent of suffering in the Crimean War, all carefully recorded in albums:

She had amazing albums compiled of the severely injured and maimed soldiers after they had returned. She met them and the photographs become a personal record of her interaction with these men. She had the photographers compile the soldier images for her with very detailed captions.¹³

Even earlier, Albert had pioneered the use of photography to create a visual inventory of all of Raphael's known paintings and drawings, as an adjunct to cataloguing the Royal Collection, and had urged the Photographic Society to establish a reference collection of exemplary works.¹⁴ Long before Albert Kahn's 'Archives of the Planet' project in the early twentieth century,¹⁵ Victoria and Albert clearly understood the documentary as well as the personal value of photography – a fact that apparently still needs to be asserted against the sentimentalising account of 'royal amateurs' recording their leisured lives.¹⁶ In view of this long history of growing up with the medium, Victoria's overseeing an approved Jubilee image of herself, knowing this would become an essential imperial icon in the era of expanding 'mechanical reproducibility', seems like a far-sighted recognition of the role of image in the interactive system that imperialism had become.¹⁷

THE MOVING IMAGE

We have seen that both Victoria and Albert were well aware of innovation in photography from the 1850s onwards. So it would hardly be surprising that Victoria should show an interest in a subsequent development, which was widely advertised as 'animated photography'.¹⁸ Equally, pioneer filmmakers, like many other inventors, were well aware of the potential value of royal 'patronage', which had already been conferred on many photographers during previous decades.¹⁹ Birt Acres was the first British photographer to seek royal permission for moving pictures. His partnership with Robert Paul had produced a workable moving picture camera before they split acrimoniously in

the spring of 1895, whereupon Acres travelled to Germany and filmed Kaiser Wilhelm (Victoria's grandson) opening the Kiel Canal, and in August took more films of the Kaiser reviewing troops in Berlin. This was before film projection had been developed, so they would have been seen on Kinetoscopes before the end of that year, when first the Lumières, then Paul, took up projection (some of the Paul–Acres 1895 films were shown by Edison in New York in April 1896, at the launch of his projection system, the Vitascope).

During 1896, Acres continued to seek royal patronage, and gave a screening for the Prince of Wales at Marlborough House on 21 July 1896 'by royal request', where he was assisted by the future producer Cecil Hepworth. This resulted from Acres having filmed a visit by the Prince and Princess of Wales to the Cardiff Exhibition on 27 June, which he wanted permission to exhibit publicly.²⁰ According to the official British Monarchy account, 'before giving his permission, The Prince of Wales asked Acres to bring the film to Marlborough House for inspection'.²¹ There had been press reports of Acres having made a hole in the exhibition wall to gain a better view of the visitors – allegedly with permission, although not from the royal party – and in this (lost) film, the Prince of Wales was seen scratching his head. Despite this 'indiscretion', the royal couple were apparently happy to invite him to show the film, along with some twenty other subjects, in a marquee at Marlborough House, before forty specially invited guests.

The future Edward VII seems to have been aware of film's ability to capture the moment from an early stage, and visited the Alhambra Music Hall in June 1896 to see what had become the first major success of British 'animated photography': Robert Paul's film of the Derby, won by the Prince's horse, Persimmon. Having filmed the finish of the race at Epsom, when an enthusiastic crowd surged onto the course, Paul hurried back to London to develop and print the film, which he was able to show the following evening as a novel addition to his regular Animatographe programme:

[A]n enormous audience at the Alhambra Theatre witnessed the Prince's Derby all to themselves amidst wild enthusiasm, which all but drowned the strains of 'God Bless the Prince of Wales', as played by the splendid orchestra.²²

Another report confirmed that the film was encored at the Alhambra, and also at another music hall which Paul supplied with a regular programme, the Canterbury.²³ Paul filmed the public procession that accompanied Edward's

daughter Princess Maud marrying Prince Charles of Denmark on 22 July (another lost film), and it is likely that Paul's 'animated photograph film' would have offered a considerably livelier image than the formal group photograph published in the *Illustrated London News*.²⁴ It almost certainly offered a better view of the procession of carriages and Life Guards than many lining the procession route would have had, just as Acres's earlier film had offered unusual intimacy with royal personages.²⁵

Queen Victoria's own initiation into moving pictures came in early October 1896, when J. Downey was summoned to Balmoral to take photographs of a visit by the Tsar and his wife, Alexandra, who was Victoria's granddaughter and a frequent visitor to Britain in her youth before marrying Nicholas. This Downey was a son of William Ernest Downey, proprietor of the leading portrait studio W. & D. Downey in London, and already an official photographer to the Queen,²⁶ which helps explain why an otherwise obscure South Shields firm, J. & F. Downey, was given this commission. One of Downey's assistants, T. J. Harrison, had been working on a film camera of his own design, and Downey junior took the camera to Balmoral, along with his normal still equipment, and asked if he might also take some animated photographs. The Queen agreed, recording her own reaction in her journal:

At 12 went down to below the terrace ... & were all photographed by Downey by the new cinematograph process, which makes moving pictures by winding off a reel of films. We were walking up & down & the children jumping about. Then took a turn in the pony chair.²⁷

Victoria would not see the result until the following month, when an elaborate screening was arranged at Windsor Castle, probably as a treat to mark the tenth birthday of a grandson, Prince Alexander. The show on 23 November included lantern slides 'from some of the old Royal Photographs and the modern Art Studies', and a selection of ten films drawn from the Lumières' and Paul's catalogues, finishing with the now celebrated 'Prince's Derby', as it had become known.²⁸

According to a report in the *Lady's Pictorial* in December, the audience at Windsor included 'the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and their children, Princess Christian and Princess Henry of Battenberg and her children', together with 'some forty or fifty ladies and gentlemen of the Royal household'. The Queen viewed the show with her

opera-glass, and was 'delighted with the animated photographs, wondering if it were possible to repeat the views'. When told that this would take time – since films were not wound onto take-up spools at this date – she 'was pleased to withdraw her request'.²⁹ Later, she wrote in her journal:

After tea went to the Red Drawingroom where so called 'animated pictures' were shown off, including the groups taken in September [*sic*] at Balmoral. It is a very wonderful process, representing people, their movements & actions, as if they were alive.³⁰

After she left, according to the *Lady's Pictorial*, 'some of the young Royal children came behind the screen and displayed much curiosity as to the working of the views and the lighting of the same by electric light and oxy-hydrogen'.

What the Windsor audience had seen was in fact an unusual and complex presentation, making use of two film projectors – one for the 70mm Balmoral films (only completed on the morning of the show) and a Paul Theatrograph for the others – with a magic lantern for photographs from the royal collection, many of which would have been taken by Downey senior. Three Balmoral films are listed in the programme, and presumably these are the source of three shots now extant: one of the donkey carriage, which had become Victoria's preferred vehicle in old age, turning; a second extended shot of the carriage amid a crowd of parents, children and dogs, including the Queen holding a white dog in her carriage; and a third of the carriage coming towards the camera, with guests walking alongside.³¹ This appears to be the sole surviving footage of Victoria among her extended family, similar in form and content to the conventional family film that stretches from Louis Lumière to the present day; and it is surely significant that Victoria recorded the audience as including 'we 5 of the family'.³² Spanning three generations, from the matriarch to her grandchildren, it conveys a strong sense of the relative informality of life within the court family circle. And knowing that it was seen first by many of those who appeared in it brings it within the defining form of all family film – intended to be seen primarily or exclusively by those who appear in it.³³

What differentiates the Balmoral film from other family records of the period, of course, is that it shows Victoria, Queen of Britain and Empress of India, in a 'domestic' setting, and to our eyes strongly reinforces the image that Victoria and Albert had created of a 'bourgeois' rather than a courtly lifestyle. It also makes visible the interconnectedness of European monarchy at this time, with Nikolai ('Nicky' in Victoria's journal), the recently crowned Tsar of Russia,

wearing plain country dress and walking respectfully alongside his wife's grandmother. Nikolai had married Victoria's granddaughter, Alix, Princess Alexandra of Hesse-Darmstadt, in 1894, the same year that his father Alexander III died, but was not crowned Tsar until 1896. Downey and Paul were both quick to advertise that they had 'exhibited before Her Majesty at Windsor Castle',³⁴ but there is no evidence that this intimate family footage was widely, if ever, seen outside the royal family until modern times.³⁵

Five months before the Balmoral film, in May 1896, Nikolai had his own first encounter with the new medium, which showed its power both to celebrate and embarrass. Two days after the coronation, which was filmed exclusively by Charles Moisson and Francis Doublier for Lumière, the new Tsar was to be presented to the ordinary people of Russia at Khodynka Field, a military parade ground outside Moscow. Some half-million people gathered from early in the morning to receive a souvenir package of food and gifts from the Tsar, but in the afternoon a rumour began to spread that there would not be enough for all. Panic spread as people began rushing towards the food and drink tables and over 1,300 were trampled to death – some estimates have claimed up to 5,000 – with another 1,300 injured. Nicholas had left the scene by this time, but when he was informed of the tragedy decided not to attend a banquet that night at the French Embassy, before being persuaded to do so by his uncles.³⁶

The disaster had been filmed by Moisson and Doublier, but the film was taken from them and never seen again.³⁷ However, in July, another Lumière travelling operator, Alexandre Promio, managed to present a programme before the Tsar and Tsaritsa; and in the following year, Boleslaw Matuszewski, a Pole who had moved from Paris to Warsaw, became 'photographer to Tsar Nicholas' (although apparently only on a commercial basis), and took both still photographs and film of the imperial family, including the state visit by President Félix Faure of France in 1897.³⁸ When the former German Chancellor Otto Bismarck accused Faure of not showing respect by removing his hat in the presence of the Tsar, this slur was effectively refuted by Matuszewski showing his films of the visit in a special presentation at the Elysée Palace in Paris in January 1898.³⁹ Later in the same year, Matuszewski would publish two pamphlets arguing for the value of films as a 'source of history', now widely regarded as among the earliest documents to advocate film archiving.⁴⁰

Compared with the short royal films of 1896, Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in June 1897 provided the first major spectacle of the film age, on a par with

the passion plays and boxing matches that pioneered extended filmic presentation as a commercial proposition. The Jubilee was also credited, nearly forty years later, with helping to develop or revive interest in moving pictures, after film companies' operators lined the route of the procession and subsequently promoted their films.⁴¹ Unlike Victoria's earlier Golden Jubilee, focused on the Queen herself and attended by fellow crowned heads of Europe, this was conceived by the dynamic new Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain as a 'festival of the British Empire'. With the aid of Reginald Brett, then Secretary of the Board of Works, who had become close to both the Queen and the Prince of Wales, he ensured that

the diamond jubilee of 1897 was showier, more triumphal, and more imperial than previous London ceremonies. The jubilee organizers also persuaded the queen to drive south of the river through Kennington. They were attempting to bring the monarchy into closer contact with both the empire abroad and the newly enfranchised working classes at home.⁴²

Governors and heads of state of the dominions and colonies were summoned to make up a great procession, which took the Queen from Buckingham Palace to St Paul's and back. But the major coup which made the Jubilee spectacular in a new way – and eminently filmable – was the massive cast of 50,000 servicemen, both mounted and on foot, many wearing exotic 'colonial' uniforms, that accompanied the royal party and dignitaries in open carriages. A journalist, G. W. Stevens, summed up what the organisers had achieved in this procession:

Up they came, more and more, new types, new realms at every couple of yards, an anthropological museum – a living gazetteer of the British Empire. With them came their English officers, whom they obey and follow like children. And you begin to understand, as never before, what the Empire amounts to. Not only that we possess all these remote outlandish places ... but also that these people are working, not simply under us, but with us.⁴³

There were, of course, dissenting views, from the likes of Beatrice Webb, Keir Hardie and other anti-imperialists.⁴⁴ But during the heady days of the Jubilee, when even the warm sunshine became known as 'the Queen's weather', much of the country seemed to enter into a delirium of self-congratulation and identification with the aged Queen, so little seen since the death of her beloved Albert in 1861. And If Victoria was initially reluctant to take part in a public

3 The Diamond Jubilee procession on 22 June 1897 provided an unprecedented spectacle for crowds lining the route, and for the many film companies who had secured vantage points.

celebration of her sixty-year reign, she could hardly doubt the affection of her people. She wrote in her journal:

No-one ever I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me, passing through those 6 miles of streets, including Constitution Hill. The crowds were quite indescribable, & their enthusiasm truly marvellous & deeply touching. The cheering was quite deafening, & every face seemed to be filled with real joy. I was much moved & gratified.⁴⁵

To which a recent historian of the Jubilee year adds: '[A]t times the response overwhelmed her, and keen observers noted that she frequently wiped away tears as she received this thunderous ovation.'⁴⁶

The Lumière coverage, by its star cameraman Promio, began with two films, taken on Sunday 20 June, as Victoria arrived at Paddington from Windsor and her cortège was followed by crowds. Two days later, the Jubilee procession was filmed by cameramen stationed at many points along the

route, among crowds that were estimated to total 3 million. Robert Paul recalled that:

Large sums were paid for suitable camera positions, several of which were secured for my operators. I myself operated a camera perched on a narrow ledge in the Church yard. Several continental cinematographers came over, and it was related of one that, when the Queen's carriage passed he was under his seat changing film, and of another, hanging on the railway bridge at Ludgate Hill, that he turned his camera until he almost fainted, only to find, on reaching a dark room, that the film had failed to start.⁴⁷

Contemporary commentators foresaw that film would carry this spectacle to wider audiences. The showman's paper *The Era* urged:

Those loyal subjects of her Majesty who did not witness the glorious pageant of the Queen's progress through the streets of London ... should not miss the opportunity of seeing the wonderful series of pictures at the Empire, giving a complete representation of the Jubilee procession ... by the invention of the Cinématographe ... our descendants will be able to learn how the completion of the sixtieth year of Queen Victoria's reign was celebrated.⁴⁸

Throughout Britain, a variety of new exhibitors of moving pictures made the Diamond Jubilee the centrepiece of their programmes throughout the second half of 1897 and into the following year. Producers and distributors experienced a boom in sales, and even resorted to renting the most popular items to secure maximum returns. One pioneer itinerant exhibitor, William Slade from Cheltenham, had no prior entertainment experience, but toured throughout England and Scotland in 1897, featuring in all his shows five Diamond Jubilee subjects, with the Queen at St Paul's always considered the highlight.⁴⁹ A writer who interviewed Paul about his films of the Jubilee introduced his article in *Cassell's Family Magazine* with an eye to the value of moving pictures as a chronicle:

This automatic spectator, who is destined to play an important part in life and literature by treasuring up the 'fleeting shows' of the world for the delight of thousands in distant countries and in future ages.⁵⁰

The processions had indeed been organised like a pageant or 'gazetteer' of the Empire, with highly recognisable figures from the dominions and detachments of their armed forces. In Ireland, with its already long history of home-rule and

independence campaigns, the Jubilee films inevitably provided a focus for different factions to demonstrate their positions. While they played for substantial seasons in Dublin and Belfast, there were reports of vociferous hostility at the latter's Empire Theatre in November when the orchestra played 'God Save the Queen', after which a diarist wrote that he 'thought the angry gods and balconyites would tear down the house in their exceeding wrath'.⁵¹

Elsewhere across the Empire, the recorded responses seem to have been mainly appreciative, and often rapturous in the most distant countries. Six weeks after the Jubilee, the Melbourne showman Harry Rickards, who had first presented animated photographs a year earlier, advertised on Friday 13 August that 'an enormous attraction will be announced tomorrow'. Monday's edition of the Melbourne *Herald* enthused about

one of the most thrilling spectacles ever witnessed, the appearance of Her Most Gracious Majesty on the Royal Carriage, drawn by six cream ponies, causing a perfect blizzard of LOYAL and Acclamative ENTHUSIASM, the vast audience rising EN MASSE, cheering incessantly until the picture was reproduced.⁵²

As the screenings continued in Melbourne, 'the waving arm of Sir George Turner', the Australian Prime Minister, was reported to be 'loudly applauded every evening'.⁵³ In Canada, where there were also no doubt mixed responses, especially in Quebec, the dominion's first premier of French ancestry, Sir Wilfred Laurier, was appreciatively recognised by local audiences, who would also have known that he had been knighted on the morning of the Jubilee procession.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, the Jubilee films provided a focus for displays of pro- as well as anti-British sentiment across the sprawling Empire, with these demonstrations most vociferous where there were active independence movements, and equally strong loyalist communities. We might wonder how aware the participants in the Jubilee procession were of these reactions? One of the earliest presentations of the Jubilee films to those who had taken part in the procession must have been the royal command performance at St James's Palace on 20 July, when the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company was invited to give a 'special exhibition' after a banquet celebrating the Prince of Wales's appointment as Grand Master of the Order of the Bath. On show were the Diamond Jubilee procession, along with the associated naval review at Spithead and military review at Aldershot, all filmed in Biograph's impressive 68mm format: an appropriately ceremonial and martial programme for this all-male company.

However, in November, a selection of Lumière films was presented to a mixed audience at Windsor by H. J. Hitchens, the manager of the Empire, with the theatre's full orchestra accompanying, conducted by Leopold Wenzel. The Queen recorded the occasion in her journal:

After tea went with the children to the Green Drawingroom, where the Ladies & Gentlemen were assembled, & where we saw Cinematograph representing parts of my Jubilee Procession, & various other things. They are very wonderful, but I thought them a little hazy & rather too rapid in their movements.⁵⁴

Victoria's comment on the quality of the presentation, which suggests that the projector set-up was less than ideal, and that the films were shown too fast, demonstrates that the seventy-eight-year-old Queen was still a photographic enthusiast, as well as a shrewd judge of quality.

The British Mutoscope and Biograph, an offshoot of the original American company, started operations early in 1897, and appears to have adopted a deliberate policy of courting royal relationships, possibly in order to counteract the dubious reputation of its Mutoscope subjects, which often featured titillating images of glamorous women.⁵⁵ In the summer of 1897, their record of *Afternoon Tea in the Gardens of Clarence House* showed three generations of the royal family at a garden party with what Richard Brown and Barry Anthony term 'startling informality'.⁵⁶ British Bioscope's relationship with the royal family continued to bear fruit after the St James's Palace showing. They filmed the Queen laying the foundation stone of the Victoria and Albert Museum on 17 May 1899, while a Biograph show was given at Sandringham on 29 June.⁵⁷ And in the summer of 1900, Biograph filmed what is probably the most important of the early 'intimate' royal films, *Children of the Royal Family of England*, which showed 'our future king at play' – namely Prince Edward of York, later Edward VIII.⁵⁸ This two-part film, made over two mornings, was a major success for the company, becoming an extremely popular item in Biograph programmes at the Palace Theatre, and later on their home-viewing system, the Kinora.⁵⁹ And Biograph's relationship with the future king, Prince Albert, soon to be Edward VII, would continue, as they filmed many events throughout his reign.

The Diamond Jubilee was the last great public occasion of the Queen's long reign. However, the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War late in 1899 led to Victoria not visiting France, as was her springtime custom, but instead travelling in April to Ireland, where at least four companies filmed her procession in Dublin and reception by the city's Corporation, followed by a review of

troops in Phoenix Park and a large children's party.⁶⁰ With various currents of nationalist and home-rule sentiment running high, following the centenary of the 1798 United Irishmen uprising, there were inevitably protests during the visit. As Kevin and Emer Rockett note, some members of the Corporation boycotted the Queen's reception, while the nationalist leaders Maud Gonne and James Connolly 'organised a nationalist riposte, the "patriotic children's treat", for 15,000 poor children'.⁶¹ If the extant footage of the visit does not register the dissent it provoked among Irish nationalists and home-rule campaigners (although a man visibly appealing to the crowd near the Queen's carriage could conceivably represent some protest in progress⁶²), neither does it reveal the equivalent enthusiasm that greeted the films in loyalist quarters. One of the two Belfast-based cameramen who filmed Victoria's visit to Dublin, John Walter Hicks, who also carried on his film activities as 'Professor Kinetos', improved on Paul's Derby coup by having his coverage of the Queen's arrival ready to show by the same evening a hundred miles away at the Empire Theatre in Belfast, where it was reportedly 'cheered to the echo' – in striking contrast to the Jubilee response three years earlier.⁶³

By Christmas Victoria's health had begun to decline and she died at Osborne on 22 January 1901. She had left detailed instructions for the detail of her funeral (to include mementoes of Albert and of her loyal Scottish retainer John Brown), but the actual procession followed a similar pattern to the Jubilee after her coffin reached London, with many film cameramen seeking the same camera positions they had used for the Jubilee. The funeral films were also widely shown, although the grey winter weather made them considerably less striking than those of the Jubilee.

Two anecdotes from early in the new century reveal how rapidly awareness of the role of film in portraying royal ceremonial was advancing. The best known of these comes from the memoir by the pioneer producer Cecil Hepworth, who had positioned three cameras along the route of Victoria's funeral procession. He operated one of the cameras, positioning himself inside the railings of Grosvenor Gardens, opposite Victoria station. As the procession approached, headed by the new King, Edward, Hepworth began to crank his camera, and was horrified by the noise this made in the prevailing silence. He later wrote: 'If I could have had my dearest wish, then the ground would certainly have opened at my feet and swallowed me and my beastly machine.'⁶⁴ However, the noise of the camera attracted Edward's attention, and he halted the procession for a moment so that a 'cinematograph record' of the procession

could be preserved for posterity. Another anecdote appears in the memoirs of an ex-India civil servant, J. H. Rivett-Carnac, who had been an aide-de-camp to Victoria, and rode in the procession for her son Edward's coronation in 1903. Rivett-Carnac recalled how 'a pipe band suddenly struck up nearby, so that the good horse stood straight up on his hind legs and it was quite as much as I could do to keep my seat'. He added: 'Although it was interesting enough to see oneself and show oneself to one's friends in the "living pictures" riding along in the procession, one did not want to be handed down to posterity coming off one's horse in an undignified attitude.'⁶⁵

Edward's coronation was extensively covered by all the leading film companies, in marked contrast to the relatively modest occasion of his mother's, sixty-four years earlier, on the threshold of the era of photography. An indication of the level of filmic interest was also provided by one enterprising producer's decision to commission a fake film of the Westminster Abbey event. Charles Urban, manager of the Warwick Trading Company in London, commissioned Georges Méliès, already known for his trick films, to solve the problem of not being able to film inside Westminster Abbey by staging a film of it in Paris in time for the scheduled date of the coronation, 26 June. However, due to Edward's illness, the coronation was delayed until 9 August, when the film played as a headliner at the Alhambra Music Hall (where the Persimmon Derby had been shown six years earlier) before touring the world as the first 'royal documentary'.⁶⁶ Urban's investment in this coverage, and that of the other companies, confirm that the advent of the photographic image, both still and moving, had made the British monarchy a highly marketable spectacle.

POSTERITY

What we can discover in the filming of Victoria and her children between 1896 and 1900 are two primordial film genres in their earliest form. One is the 'family film' that would become central to amateur practice during the twentieth century – even if Victoria's family films were very different from those of her subjects. For the British branch of the 'family' of Hanover (later changed to Saxe-Coburg and Gotha), film 'could break down barriers of social etiquette ... and present a vivid glimpse of their private life to their subjects'.⁶⁷ That such glimpses were contrived could hardly be doubted, even if the journalistic context surrounding *Children of the Royal Family* was at pains to stress the 'courtesy and thoughtfulness of the Royal trio', as well as their 'unaffectedness', during

the two mornings that they were filmed by Biograph, after being shown several of the company's Mutoscope subjects as an induction into what filming would involve and produce.⁶⁸ These are the prototypes of what would become the British royal family's most potent mode of communication with its subjects: the occasional and partial 'glimpse' of informal family life, away from the official news media, yet communicated by these same media in 'special' documentaries.⁶⁹

The other genre, raised to a new level by the large-scale filming of the Diamond Jubilee, is the ceremonial procession. While processions quickly became a staple of early film programmes, usually structured around military formations passing the camera, the Diamond Jubilee procession also brought together a number of significant narratives, which help explain its wide popularity.⁷⁰ One was the intended 'gazetteer' of the British Empire, with its exotic diversity made visible in the ethnic variety of those processing, condensing into a dynamic yet disciplined image of the very concept of the Empire.⁷¹ A second, however, was the appearance, after long seclusion, of the sovereign at the centre of this mighty web. The contrast between Victoria's small, elderly figure, in simple widow's clothing, and the vast spectacle surrounding her struck many spectators at the time. One observer was the American writer Mark Twain, hired for the occasion by the *New York Journal*, who offered an intriguing comparison between processions as 'shows' and 'symbols', comparing the Jubilee procession with Henry V's London victory procession after Agincourt, and describing it as 'a symbol, and allegory of England's grandeur'.⁷² While criticising the composition of the procession for what it omitted – the sources of British power and prosperity – Twain also concluded that the Queen 'was the procession itself, all the rest was mere embroidery'.⁷³ This seems to express what many contemporaries also felt, that the figure of Victoria somehow eclipsed the pageantry all around it. Through film this microcosmic image of the Queen, always seen distantly by the lenses of the time, circulated globally. The contrast between such an image and the 'official' Jubilee close-up portrait photographs could not be greater.

Before 1896, Victoria had already lived through fifty years of still photography, as an early adopter and connoisseur of the successive processes and formats, an important collector, and patron of the leading photographic society in Britain. Encountering 'animated photography' in her old age, she seems to have retained her earlier interest in new techniques and subject matter, and a willingness to assess their quality. As Twain observed, she had witnessed almost every

technology of modern life develop during her reign; and on the morning of the Jubilee, she pressed a button that sent a telegraphic message around the world.⁷⁴ Seeing and sharing the response to these first family and procession films, she may well have guessed that animated photography was about to create a new paradigm by 'representing people and their actions as if they were alive' far into the future.

NOTES

- 1 John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 3.
- 2 Margaret Homans, 'Review: *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch*', *Victorian Studies* 46:3 (Spring 2004), p. 520.
- 3 Bill Jay, 'Queen Victoria's second passion: royal patronage of photography in the 19th century' (1988), in Jay's articles online, www.billjayonphotography.com/QnVictoria2ndPassion.pdf. The date of her proposal is corroborated by Christopher Hibbert in *Queen Victoria: A Personal Biography* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), pp. 108–9, and other biographies, and in Victoria's journal, although this makes no mention of daguerreotypes.
- 4 Jay, 'Queen Victoria's second passion', p. 3.
- 5 Queen Victoria, *Journals* (3 January 1854).
- 6 Charles Wheatstone, 'On some remarkable, and hitherto unobserved, phenomena of binocular vision', *Proceedings of the Royal Society* 128 (1838).
- 7 Victoria records 'Stereoscope' in her draft journal entry for 25 August 1855, implying private time spent viewing stereographs while travelling in France. See *Journals* online: www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItemFromId.do?ResultsID=2779406415851&FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ItemID=qvj08274&volumeType=DRAFT#zoomHolder.
- 8 Juan, Count of Montizon came to England after the uprisings of 1848 and was a founder member of the Photographic Society. After renouncing his claim to the Spanish throne, he lived for the rest of his life in Worthing and Hove. One of his London Zoo photographs, of a hippopotamus, illustrates his Wikipedia entry, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:The_Hippopotamus_at_the_Regents_Park_Zoo,_ca._1855.jpg.
- 9 The Collodion process, invented by Frederick Archer in 1851, involved a glass plate being coated, exposed and developed within less than fifteen minutes, often requiring a portable darkroom. It remained the preferred photographic process until the 1880s.
- 10 Jay, 'Queen Victoria's second passion', pp. 5–6.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 12 Her choice was apparently not the Gustav Mullins portrait taken on the day of the Jubilee, but an earlier image, which is now listed as 'photographer unknown'. Anne

- Lyden, quoted in interview by Barry Keevins, 'Picture pioneer: Queen Victoria's passion for photography', *Sunday Express* (24 January 2014).
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Jay, 'Queen Victoria's second passion', p. 7.
- 15 On Kahn's collection, see Teresa Castro, 'Les Archives de la planète: a cinematographic atlas', *Jump Cut* 48 (Winter 2006).
- 16 An attitude still apparent in much documentation of Victoria's photographic collecting. See for instance the online *Diamond Jubilee Scrapbook*, a website supported by the official British monarchy website: www.queen-victorias-scrapbook.org/.
- 17 Cannadine quotes P. D. Morgan on the need to reach a 'synoptic view' of the imperial system in his *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2001). The source is Philip D. Morgan, 'Encounters between British and "indigenous" peoples, c. 1500–c. 1800', in Martin Daunt and Rick Halpern (eds), *Empire and Others: British Encounters with Indigenous Peoples, 1600–1850* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 68.
- 18 See, for instance, Robert Paul's catalogues, 1897–1901, British Film Institute Special Collections.
- 19 Jay records the earliest of these Royal Warrants as William Edward Kilburn being appointed 'Photographer to Her Majesty and His Royal Highness Prince Albert' in 1847, while later appointments were more specific, referring to 'Her majesty's photographer on paper' (Nicolaas Henneman, 1848) and 'Royal Photographer for Scotland' (George Washington Wilson, 1860). 'Queen Victoria's second passion', p. 5.
- 20 *Prince and Princess of Wales Arriving in State at the Cardiff Exhibition* (Northern Photographic Works [Acres], 40ft). Dennis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue, 1895–1985: A Reference Guide* (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1986), p. 6.
- 21 *Official website of the British Monarchy*, www.royal.gov.uk/LatestNewsandDiary/Pressreleases/2002/TheRoyalFilmPerformance2002.aspx.
- 22 As reported in an article in the *Strand Magazine* (August 1896), p. 140.
- 23 *The Era* (6 June 1896), p. 16.
- 24 *Illustrated London News*, supplement on the royal wedding (1 August 1896).
- 25 *Princess Maud's Wedding* (Paul's Theatrograph, a two-part film of 80ft), released on 8 August. Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue*, p. 6.
- 26 Michael Pritchard, 'Downey' entry in John Hannay (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 436.
- 27 Queen Victoria, *Journals* (3 October 1896), www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?ItemNumber=1&FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2785135291831&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemID=qvj23243&volumeType=PSBEA.
- 28 The printed programme is reproduced in John Barnes, *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England, 1894–1901*, vol. 1, 1894–1896 (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1998), p. 144.
- 29 *Lady's Pictorial* (December 1896), quoted in Barnes, *Beginnings*, pp. 213–15.

- 30 Queen Victoria, *Journals* (23 November 1896), www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2785136687191&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemNumber=2&ItemID=qvj23294&volumeType=PSBEA.
- 31 This material was originally very unsteady, no doubt due to the improvised camera, but has been effectively stabilised and tinted by the BFI National Archive. Accessible on YouTube as *Scenes at Balmoral* (1896) at www.youtube.com/watch?v=E10c50DNhHY.
- 32 Queen Victoria, *Journals* (23 November 1896).
- 33 Collette Piault, 'Films de famille et films sur la famille', in Natalie Tousignant (ed.), *Le Film de famille* (Brussels: Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, 2004), p. 57. See also Roger Odin (ed.), *Le Film de famille. Usage privé, usage public* (Paris: Méridiens-Klincksieck, 1999), p. 6. Odin insists that the family film, whatever its technical qualities, has a unique significance and adequacy for its subjects.
- 34 Barnes, *Beginnings*, p. 215.
- 35 The Balmoral film is now in the BFI National Archive, and has been included in documentaries. It has not proved possible to establish when it was first seen publicly.
- 36 An album of photographs recording the coronation and Khodynka Field, before and after the stampede, is online at www.angelfire.com/pa/ImperialRussian/royalty/russia/corphotoalbum.html.
- 37 Jay Leyda recorded an account of the disaster, as told to him by Doublier, in his *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960), p. 19.
- 38 For the most complete account of Matuszewski's somewhat mysterious career, see Magdalena Mazaraki, 'Boleslaw Matuszewski: photographe et opérateur de cinéma', 1895 44 (2004).
- 39 Reported in *Le Figaro*, 'A travers Paris' (12 January 1898), pp. 1–2, quoted in Mazaraki, 'Boleslaw Matuszewski'.
- 40 Boleslaw Matuszewski, *Une Nouvelle Source de l'histoire; La Photographie animée* (both Paris, 1898).
- 41 Reminiscing about his early career as a film pioneer in 1936, Robert Paul recalled that 'in [the] year before the Jubilee, public interest in animated pictures seemed to be on the wane'. R. W. Paul, 'Before 1910: cinematograph experiences', *Proceedings of the British Kinematograph Society* 38 (1936), p. 5.
- 42 William M. Kuhn, 'Brett, Reginald Baliol', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, www.oxforddnb.com/templates/article.jsp?articleid=320558&back.
- 43 G. W. Steevens, 'Up they came', *Daily Mail* (23 June 1897). The fullest account of the Jubilee and its filming is in Luke McKernan, 'Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee' (2012), accessible online: http://lukemckernan.com/wp-content/uploads/queen_victoria_diamond_jubilee.pdf.
- 44 For a survey of opinion on the Jubilee, see Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), pp. 130–6.

- 45 Queen Victoria, *Journals* (22 June 1897), www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItem.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2824165630308&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemNumber=1&ItemID=qvj23505&volumeType=PSBEA.
- 46 Greg King, *Twilight of Splendor: The Court of Queen Victoria during her Diamond Jubilee Year* (Hoboken: John Wiley, 2007).
- 47 Paul, 'Before 1910'.
- 48 *The Era* (27 June 1896).
- 49 Patricia Cook, PhD research on William Slade's touring exhibition, Birkbeck College.
- 50 'Living pictures of the Queen', *Cassell's Family Magazine* (August 1897), p. 327.
- 51 Joseph Holloway, 'Diary', quoted in Kevin Rockett and Emer Rockett, *Magic Lantern, Panorama and Moving Picture Shows in Ireland, 1786–1909* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2013), p. 231.
- 52 *Melbourne Herald* (16 August 1897).
- 53 *Melbourne Herald* (23 August 1897).
- 54 Queen Victoria, *Journals* (23 November 1897) www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItemFromId.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2824167480910&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=1&ItemID=qvj23659&volumeType=PSBEA and www.queenvictoriasjournals.org/search/displayItemFromId.do?FormatType=fulltextimgsrc&QueryType=articles&ResultsID=2824167480910&filterSequence=0&PageNumber=2&ItemID=qvj23659&volumeType=PSBEA.
- 55 Richard Brown and Barry Anthony argue that this was a deliberate strategy in their study, *A Victorian Film Enterprise: The History of the British Mutoscope and Biograph Company, 1897–1915* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2001), pp. 57–8.
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 71n.
- 58 The films are also known as *Children of the Royal Family Playing Soldiers*, a title hardly suited to the second year of the Anglo-Boer War.
- 59 Brown and Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise*, pp. 59–60.
- 60 Surviving footage from this visit is in the British Pathé collection, viewable on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9gwnKH15Xo. This appears to show only the procession, although a man is seen on the road appealing to the waving crowd who occupy the foreground.
- 61 Rockett and Rockett, *Magic Lantern, Panorama and Moving Picture Shows in Ireland*, p. 235.
- 62 This footage from British Pathé can be accessed on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9gwnKH15Xo. A man waving his hat and shouting at the crowd in a grandstand abruptly disappears, as a result of a jump-cut in the shot. This is most likely due to the fragmentary state of the film material, but could conceivably have recorded some disruptive behavior at this moment in the ceremony, subsequently cut.
- 63 Rockett and Rockett, *Magic Lantern, Panorama and Moving Picture Shows in Ireland*, p. 235.

- 64 Cecil Hepworth, *Came the Dawn: Memoirs of a Film Pioneer* (London: Phoenix House, 1951), p. 56. A photograph of the moment described appears on p. 24.
- 65 J. H. Rivett-Carnac, *Many Memories of Life in India, at Home, and Abroad* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1910), p. 410.
- 66 After this unconventional success, Urban would go on to play a leading part in organising the filming of both the Delhi Durbar and the coronation of George V.
- 67 Brown and Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise*, p. 57.
- 68 The *Harmsworth Magazine* carried extensive coverage, with illustrations, of the making of *Children of the Royal Family* under the heading ‘Our future king at play’ in October 1900. Quoted in Brown and Anthony, *A Victorian Film Enterprise*, p. 59.
- 69 Such documentaries include: *Royal Family* (1969), *Elizabeth R* (1992), *Windsor Castle – A Royal Year* (2005), *Monarchy: The Royal Family at Work* (2007).
- 70 On the aesthetics of procession films, and especially the stereoscopic effect of filming processions from an oblique angle, see Gerry Turvey, ‘Panoramas, parades and the picturesque: the aesthetics of British actuality films, 1895–1901’, *Film History* 16:1 (2004).
- 71 David Cannadine has written of the ‘interconnected pageants and mutually reinforcing ceremonials [with which], the British Empire put itself on display, and represented itself to itself’, in his *Ornamentalism*, p. 111. See also my discussion of his thesis about the primacy of the ‘ornamental’, in ‘“The captains and the kings depart”: imperial departures and arrivals’, in Lee Grieveson and Colin MacCabe (eds), *Empire and Film* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).
- 72 Twain’s eye-witness account of the Jubilee first appeared in two installments in the *New York Journal* on 20 and 23 June 1897, and in a slender volume, privately printed in only 195 copies in 1910, entitled *Queen Victoria’s Jubilee 1897*, subtitled *The great procession of June 22 ... reported both in the light of history and as a spectacle*. The text is now available in Mark Twain, *A Tramp Abroad, Following the Equator, Other Travels* (New York: Library of America, 2010). See also discussion of this essay in Randall K. Knoper, *Acting Naturally: Mark Twain in the Culture of Performance* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 144–7.
- 73 Twain, *A Tramp Abroad*, p. 1051.
- 74 Victoria had sent a message to the American President in 1858, when the first transatlantic telegraph cable was successfully laid, after which telegraphic communication had become a major new communication medium, especially for Britain’s global interests. See <http://atlantic-cable.com/Books/Whitehouse/DDC/index.htm>.

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