Sixty Years a Queen (1913): a lost epic of the reign of Victoria

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When *The Life Story of David Lloyd George* (Maurice Elvey, 1918) was screened in 1996 it was greeted as a rediscovered masterpiece. Discovered in the house of Lloyd George's grandson, it was as if it had sprung from nowhere. But there was a precedent for this incipient biopic, a high-budget long feature which also juxtaposed mass scenes with an intimate focus on the private life of a famous political figure. This earlier film played at the new picture palaces of 1913 and 1914 throughout the UK to packed audiences. It received substantial media acclaim. The epic portrayed the most revered 'star' of recent British history. Its subject was the life and times of the monarch who had presided over an age of imperial expansion, a reign associated with progress in science, education, industry and European diplomacy. The film was *Sixty Years a Queen* (1913), alternatively titled *The Life and Times of Queen Victoria*. Its two producers were William George Barker, an experienced filmmaker and the owner-manager of a flourishing studio at Ealing, and George Berthold Samuelson, a successful film agent and the driving force in bringing the royal story to the screen.

Sixty Years a Queen has so far attracted only perfunctory comment in British film histories so this essay will outline aspects of its production, exhibition, distribution and reception. Although the film is lost, various primary materials survive including a single fragment (46 feet) of the early scenes of the film held by the National Film and Television Archive (NFTVA), a book of the film and a souvenir programme or press-book. The press-book contains a menu of scene headings, which list a chronological sequence from the death of William IV on 20 June 1837 to Victoria's death, divided into seven parts. The film book contains fifty-five photographic illustrations described as 'taken from the cinematograph film'.¹ These appear to be production stills, an inference supported by examining another film book from the same series. The film from this second

book, *Hamlet* (Cecil Hepworth, 1913), is mostly extant and it is clear that the illustrations have been directly printed from the film stock. These books were luxury items, retailing at one shilling. The text of the book for *Sixty Years a Queen* was written by May Wynne (aka Mabel Winifred Knowles), an unreliable historian but a popular storyteller. Writing within a conventional if increasingly old-fashioned approach, Wynne treats Victoria's life as exemplary. Despite these creative liberties, her book offers useful contextualising information and presumably reflects the film's presentation of Victoria as a shining example of domestic virtue and a dutiful monarch.

The surviving footage, rediscovered by film historian Luke McKernan, depicts the moment in which Victoria receives the news that she is to be Queen, a narrative which found particular favour in the late period of her reign. In this sequence a young Victoria calls for divine blessing on her accession to the throne by raising her arms to heaven in the kind of gestural acting used to communicate meaning in nineteenth-century theatre. This fragment exemplifies the film's portrayal of Victoria's reign with the hagiographic attitude forged at the end of the nineteenth century, celebrated and codified in the souvenir material created for her Silver and Diamond Jubilees.

As an enthusiastic royalist Samuelson had developed his pitch into a script by commissioning playwright Arthur Shirley to 'delve into the history of the early, middle and late Victorian periods to find a suitable set of incidents to develop in pictorial form'. He reused this three-act approach to periodisation in later projects.² Seeking an experienced filmmaker he approached Will Barker, whose studios at Ealing had already produced many prestige films, most notably a cinematic version of Herbert Beerbohm Tree's extravagant stage version of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. Having experienced the financial benefits of a royal subject, Barker embraced the project. Despite describing himself as a patriotic republican he expressed respect for the British monarch as the head of his nation state.³

Research for the film drew on illustrated newspapers of Victoria's reign. Julian Wylie, Samuelson's older brother, described how he, Samuelson and Barker had visited the second-hand bookshops on Charing Cross Road, where 'we got volumes of the illustrated papers of the period, we got books on the life of the Queen'.⁴ Respectful stories of royalty were a popular subject for the *Illustrated London News* (ILN), a weekly pictorial launched on 14 May 1842 and aimed at an educated readership.⁵ From 1873, 'special numbers' of the magazine were issued for commemorative occasions, the first commemorating the death of Emperor Napoleon III of France.⁶ Some of the original images were

recycled for later retrospective editions to accompany Victoria's jubilees in 1887 and 1897, and were again recycled for obituary issues on her death in 1901.⁷ These souvenir editions of the *ILN* mediated the representation of the Queen for readers in the early 1900s.

Reflecting Samuelson's three-part chronology, three different actors played Victoria at three different ages. Ina Kastner acted the young Victoria and appears in the surviving fragment; Ida Heath played the Queen in her middle years; and Mrs Henry Lytton played the older Queen.⁸ The surviving press-book lists the incidents from the film in chronological order, divided into seven acts. Part I, on Victoria's accession to the throne, offers a flavour of the full programme:

PART I

THE KING IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE QUEEN

1837, June 20th, 2am Windsor. The Marquis Conyngham and the Archbishop of Canterbury are present at the death of William IV. – The Archbishop and Lord Conyngham set out for Kensington Palace – 5am. The early awakening at Kensington Palace. We are come on business of state to the Queen, and even her sleep must give way to that. – Long live the Queen. – The young Queen holds her first Council at Kensington Palace. – 'I shall promote to the utmost of my power the happiness and welfare of my subjects.' – 1837, Sept 28th, Her Majesty holds her first review in Windsor Great Park. – The Duke of Wellington parades the Waterloo Veterans – 1838, June 27th. Coronation of Queen Victoria.

Ceremonial scenes appeared throughout the film and typify how *Sixty Years a Queen* represented early Victorian events through the filter of later attitudes. The generation of cinema had seen actuality film of royal events, notably Victoria's impressive Diamond Jubilee procession in 1897. A crop of popular 'actualities' depicted the coronation of George V in 1911, and although camera operators had not been allowed inside Westminster Abbey, the processions filmed by Barker and others were viewed at cinemas up and down the country. These records of lavish ceremonials influenced the painstaking recreation of Victoria's coronation in *Sixty Years a Queen*. This scene was staged with care, most unlike the infamously shambolic proceedings of Victoria's 'shabby coronation'.⁹ It was performed in front of an invited audience, reflecting contemporary traditions of royal ceremonial which had been influenced by the opulence of theatres during the reign of Edward VII.¹⁰

Samuelson's memoirs discussed the filming of the coronation scene.¹¹ It reportedly lasted twenty minutes and Barker tried to record it without an interruption, drawing on his experience of filming the stage production of *Henry VIII*, which was performed and recorded in a special event at Ealing.¹² The anecdotal evidence suggests it was recorded as a single take. The *Bioscope* journalist who witnessed the filming of the play reported that all scenes were performed exactly as on stage, the characters speaking their parts throughout.¹³ The first attempt was thwarted as a result of 'insufficient light', a hazard of filming in late November, but when the effort was repeated in February 1911, the result was successful enough for release.¹⁴ To achieve these long scenes in one take, Barker may have used the cameras he reputedly pioneered that could accommodate magazines of 1,000ft of film.¹⁵ However, the extended duration of the shot exacerbated the usual problem inherent in achieving consistent and sufficient lighting with a combination of variable sunshine and arc lamps.

Samuelson's autobiography recalls that the first take was ruined at a crucial moment by someone passing a teacup in front of the camera. By this time, cloud cover had reduced the natural light. To avoid the expense involved in rescheduling such a major scene for another day – and perhaps the presence of an audience of 'nobility' influenced this decision – Barker decided to try again before nightfall, compensating for the diminished daylight by increasing the lighting in the studio. Much of the scene had been successfully filmed before changeable weather once more threatened the shoot; but at the point when 'the Queen received the spurs and sword and the Dean of Westminster placed the "Armill" around the Sovereign's neck', the clouds parted and the sun shone through the glass roof, over-exposing the film stock.¹⁶ In a concerted attempt to complete the scene, Barker instructed his staff to turn off the top lights, but for some reason the interior light still grew brighter. After a vigorous intervention by Barker, partly censored in Samuelson's anecdote ('"If you don't switch those so-and-so lights off I'll come and knock your b— head off!"'), it was revealed that the extra illumination was due to a fire in the studio.¹⁷ There being no obvious reference to this fire elsewhere, presumably the blaze was safely contained.

Such physical hazards were accompanied by financial risk, with the final bill for the production cited as £12,000.¹⁸ The scale of the production and the immense efforts made to accurately reconstruct events applied the West End theatre tradition of combining well-researched design with historical drama. The filmmakers benefited from the London theatre infrastructure, such as the suppliers then profiting from the fashion for historical romantic pictures.¹⁹

Barker could supplement what was available through these companies with the props and costumes of the Empire Theatre (noted as the largest stage wardrobe in the world), to which he had unique access as 'special artist' to the venue.²⁰ The sets for *Sixty Years a Queen* were created by the in-house scenery department at Ealing and reports suggest no expense was spared. When visiting the studios in January 1914, one reporter noted that 'every spare corner was blocked up with properties and scenery relative to the great patriotic film' that included some very special and expensive pieces:

Pointing to some massive columns standing on one side, the manager explained that the firm had specially engaged an artist to visit Westminster Abbey day after day and work upon an exact replica of the age-worn pillars in the noble sacred fane. These pillars, the manager remarked, were used in the stately Abbey scenes. 'But,' he went on, showing the trouble they took with the film, 'although we paid such a big sum for them, I don't suppose we shall ever have [a use] for them again.'²¹

Other carefully reconstructed props still present in the grounds in January 1914 included 'the hurdles used in the Sebastopol scenes, and the charred remains of the gate at Cashmere'.²²

The number of different settings required for the varied film scenes demanded the exploitation of several indoor and outdoor spaces. The grounds of Barker's Ealing studios and the wider surrounds were remodelled to resemble sites from around the world. International and imperial locations featured 'the shade of impenetrable forests' which formed a backdrop to the celebrations of the Crown's annexation of British Columbia, Khartoum and the siege of Ladysmith, as well as Sebastopol and the Cashmere Gate.²³ The back lot represented Hyde Park, with the construction of a road for the carriages; studio buildings which had a 'shed-like' structure set the scene for the Anglo-Boer War conflict; and events from the Sudan and the Crimea were staged inside the studio grounds. Barker's team managed to suggest a much larger location in a limited area, as in the staging of the Delhi Durbar.²⁴ The process amazed one journalist: 'Never have men and women worked harder, and certainly never have the studios and grounds been put to such good use and undergone such rapid and remarkable changes.'²⁵

Ealing provided the majority, if not all, of the locations for the film, and about two-thirds of the actors were local.²⁶ This assisted with managing crowd scenes, an important consideration as many extras were required to represent popular Victorian spectatorship. For the later part of the chronology, 'supers'

4 Queen Victoria (Ina Kastner) proposes to Prince Albert in a photographic illustration from the May Wynne book accompanying *Sixty Years a Queen* (William Barker, 1913).

were involved in re-enacting scenes that would have evoked personal memories in 1913, and which consequently sometimes produced an emotional response; one old lady was reported as believing that she was actually having tea with Victoria: '[T]he old lady's "acting" is perfectly natural, for she was, tremendously flustered and nervous at having the honour of drinking tea with the "Queen".'²⁷

Victoria's betrothal story offered an intimate peep at royal private life behind the public show. Many were fascinated by its apparent gender reversal as it was understood that Victoria had proposed to Prince Albert, forced by her status to go against the convention that it was the man's duty to pop the question. But the young Queen was portrayed as a romantic figure, and the lace, satin, pearls and velvet of her costume added spectacle to the scene. Victoria is shown in the off-shoulder fashion and flowers associated with 1840s women's fashion. More formal dresses were utilised for the public betrothal scene of Victoria and Albert at a palace ball. Following soon after, the marriage scene was replete with rich fabrics, medals, wigs, ribbons and flowers.

The film alternated between public and private events and between imperial and domestic scenes. The battle of Sebastopol was filmed in Walpole Park with special effects of snow and explosions; local children were reportedly 'deafened

with the booming of the guns of the Crimean War'.²⁸ The Indian Mutiny was represented as a time of horror and heroism through a scene of the storming of the Cashmere Gate. These images of war were succeeded by scenes of Victoria mourning the death of her husband before famously going into seclusion. The challenge her retreat presented to retaining her relevance to public events was solved by showing the Queen in audience with important figures of her age, such as David Livingstone, Charles Dickens and Benjamin Disraeli. For example, she is seen alongside Disraeli sending the first telegraphic message to President Lincoln.

Imperial scenes without the Queen continued, notably the regime-rocking last stand of General Gordon at Khartoum, which irreparably damaged Prime Minister Gladstone's reputation. The final pictures in the book depict Victoria visiting the veterans at Netley Hospital in Hampshire. These scenes reinforced the hagiography of 'Victoria the Good', with the hospitalised men standing to attention in the presence of their Queen. When viewing the film, past and present British subjects seem to have colluded in a collective homage. The respectful behaviour of the film's characters showed its spectators how to behave when witnessing Victoria; like those portrayed on the screen they should gaze respectfully and with interest at her person, the veterans possibly even saluting her presence as do her old soldiers at Netley. This fostered the illusion of a cross-generational membership of an imaginary community working harmoniously towards a common goal. It seems to have given a therapeutic power to the film, which offered a new kind of opportunity for those inclined to celebrate and mourn recent ancestors in the emerging communal venue of the cinema.

The release of *Sixty Years a Queen* coincided with the opening of a new generation of high-investment cinemas. Immediately after its London launch at the New Gallery Kinema, Samuelson personally toured the film to trade audiences in cities around the United Kingdom. The shows offered an exemplary experience of the new era of long feature film; it provided a full performance of nearly two hours, eschewing any need for supplementary shorts, and offered a standardised musical accompaniment. Industry discussion of the appearances of *Sixty Years a Queen* on the UK cinema circuit of 1913 and 1914 indicates a new level of attention for a British long film. Although detailed information on audience statistics is not available, the film was often mentioned in the *Bioscope's* regional reports such as 'Events at Ealing', 'Exeter echoes', 'Northern notes', 'Novel lines at Leicester', 'Happenings at Hull', 'Movements at Morecambe' and 'Trawlings from Grimsby'. The reports in these columns and in local newspapers repeatedly claim that the film was breaking or threatening to break

box-office records between November 1913 and June 1914. Comments included 'this film is going strong for creating a record', 'very big business has been done with *Sixty Years a Queen*', '*Sixty Years a Queen* has met with a record reception', 'packed houses thrice daily and receipts constituted a record for the Palace'.²⁹ Some stressed the relative popularity of the film compared with other fare:

[T]here are not many films which can successfully run for a fortnight, but such has been the success of *Sixty Years a Queen* at the Mechanic's Large Hall that the management decided to retain the production during the whole of this week.³⁰

In Teesside the management warned after the success of its first night that no seats were guaranteed unless booked in advance.³¹ It seems that the film was achieving a special level of popularity at the British box-office, with positive reports emerging from Wales and Scotland as well as from England.³²

The pre-publicity for *Sixty Years a Queen* stated that tunes from the 1830s, 1840s, 1850s and 1860s were arranged specially by the musical director of a West End theatre.³³ But, outside the controlled environment of the trade show, cinemas would vary in their chosen accompaniment. Sometimes this was simply an adaptation of the music suggested by the distributors, as at the Strand Cinema de Luxe in Grimsby, Lincolnshire, where 'an organ lent the requisite effect to the solemn music'.³⁴ Highly regarded local musicians took the opportunity to perform their specialities, as in the following extracts from reports of screenings at the Picture Palace in Southport and the Corn Exchange in Alnwick, Northumberland: 'Praiseworthy musical selections were given by the famous Southport Abbey Prize Quartette';³⁵ 'Miss Pearl Grey, a highly cultured soprano vocalist, charmed the large audience with her admirable renderings of "The Prima Donna", "Comin' thro' the rye" and other lyric gems.'³⁶ 'The Prima Donna' and 'Comin' thro' the Rye' were popular pieces; perhaps the latter setting of a Robert Burns poem would have accompanied the Balmoral sequence. At other screenings there might have been a choral accompaniment, following on from the example set by the male choir at the New Kinema trade show.³⁷ At Stockton-on-Tees 'the excellent orchestra was supplemented by a full choir and the Albion Prize Quartette, the music and vocal accompaniments being greatly enjoyed'.³⁸ Choral music was a novelty for cinema, but was a common entertainment of the Victorian era. The metaphor of the choir underpinned the interpretation of *Sixty Years a Queen* as depicting the progress achieved through the combined efforts of all the social ranks. Choral music is a democratic exercise in the sense that that no expensive instruments are necessary; vocalists could perform the different parts and come together to create a communal whole.

Most cities and towns screened the film at their most prestigious cinemas. Record profits were announced for the Grand on Smithdown Road in Manchester, which achieved its greatest box-office return on Easter Monday.³⁹ In Bradford patriotic decorations and themed costumes for the staff were reported to have stimulated memories of the era for elderly spectators who recalled the distinctive costumes of the Victorian past:

The hall was lavishly decorated with flags and bunting, and the attendants were dressed in costumes of the early Victorian period. The crinolines, especially, brought back memories to many old folks who attended. An invitation had been extended to all Army and Navy veterans and old age pensioners in the city to attend the afternoon performances.⁴⁰

Sixty Years a Queen achieved unprecedented box-office success by exploiting what Eric Hobsbawm has described as the 'twilight zone' of recent history.⁴¹ For older audiences, the film was particularly poignant in re-enacting scenes which they could remember seeing in the pictorial press. Younger audiences could witness stories from the lives of their parents and grandparents through trips arranged by school and youth organisations. Group visits of schoolchildren were strongly encouraged, with special matinees and performances at the New Picture House, Halifax; the Princes Cinema, Edinburgh/Paisley; the Sun Hall, Bootle; the Corn Exchange, Alnwick; and the Quay Picture House, Lincolnshire. The boy scouts marched in procession to the performance at the Picture Coliseum in Harlesden.⁴²

This combination of cinema with civic duty was a late flowering of the Victorian philanthropic event. Victoria was known for her support for charitable and public works through her visits around the country, a pattern which was set up in the opening years of her reign: 'Assuredly the reign of Victoria will be known as the reign of royal visits; it seems to have established an era of royal and imperial sociability.'⁴³ These visits exemplify the social contact of Victoria with her subjects that historian John Plunkett has called 'civic publicness'.⁴⁴ Victoria established this royal patronage during her lifetime, and posthumously her screen representation continued this tradition. Local politicians associated themselves with the monarch's civic virtues and her regime's reputation for progress by making personal appearances at special performances. This process was triumphantly realised in the capital on 8 December at the film's premiere, which Barker remembered as attended by 'the Lord Mayor of London [and] supported by several Mayors of greater London, together with a very imposing

list of celebrities'⁴⁵. For *The Times*, this screening marked a positive change in its reviewers' attitudes towards cinema, claiming that '[A] public production of an important cinematograph film is rapidly becoming as interesting a social function as a theatrical "first-night".'⁴⁶ As well as Councillor Will Phillips's lectures accompanying the film at two Manchester cinemas, mayors and their entourages patronised performances in Plymouth, Beverley and Bristol, and education committees officially approved the performance in Exeter and Bootle.⁴⁷ Samuelson colluded with this appropriation of the film's kudos by the higher echelons of regional government when he presented an inscribed casket containing a duplicate of the film to the Lord Mayor of Bristol.⁴⁸ This official approval of the newly prestigious medium coincided with the building of attractive cinemas targeting higher-income groups. Regional mayors formally opened several of these; for example, in January 1914 the Lord Mayor of Manchester inaugurated the Deansgate Picture House and café, was built for the Alliance Cinematographic Company.⁴⁹

Samuelson used his special relationship with *Sixty Years a Queen* to introduce a new form of distribution that had been successful for the high-investment film in the USA, but which had not yet been seen in Britain – the road show. Adolph Zukor had toured *Queen Elizabeth* (*Les Amours de la Reine Elisabeth*, Henri Desfontaines and Louis Mercanton, 1912)⁵⁰ in America along similar lines to a stage production, which allowed him relatively strong control of the auditorium experience, and assisted in avoiding the many vagaries of local cinema exhibition. This was extremely attractive to producers of the large-budget long film in the UK as well as in the USA. Samuelson's road show emulated Zukor's approach and, in some instances, went beyond the trade into public screenings. He personally showed the film at various venues while it was still fresh. These screenings were family-run events: Fred Wainwright, the family chauffeur, was engaged to drive Samuelson and the reels of *Sixty Years a Queen* from venue to venue; Samuelson's mother was the cashier; his sister Rahleen and family friend Harry Lorie (soon to be Samuelson's brother-in-law) acted as ushers; Wainwright was general assistant to the project, while Samuelson himself was presenter. With costs saved by minimising outsourced labour, this operation maximised profits for the family. Box-office receipts were divided 60 per cent to Samuelson and 40 per cent to the exhibitor.⁵¹

These screenings of *Sixty Years a Queen* violated the principle of exclusive distribution when exhibition took place within an area for which his agency had

already disposed of the rights. The official body of exhibitors, the Cinematograph Exhibitors Association (CEA), complained. The controversial screenings that provoked the criticism were organised by Samuelson at the Colston Hall in Bristol and opened with a charity gala at which the Lord Mayor presided. The attendance of the Bristol Crimea and India Mutiny Veterans was felt to add a commemorative and community air to the evening. Despite the evening's takings being donated to the Lord Mayor's Hospital Fund, the event was a sound investment for Samuelson as the Colston Hall bookings continued for at least five weeks.⁵² The Bristol and West of England branch of the CEA objected to these shows, proposing to take action 'against such manufacturing and renting firms as engaged large halls for the purpose of exhibiting special films in opposition to the exhibitors'.⁵³ But although the regional initiative was considered important enough to be backed by the central body of the CEA, no mention is made of such any action in the trade pages and the 'strong action' may have simply consisted of a written condemnation of the actions of the Royal Film Agency.⁵⁴ This opposition had no serious impact on Samuelson's income, his business or his standing within the trade press. Barker remembered the reasoning behind the Colston Hall performances not as a deliberate attempt to undermine exhibitors but simply one of meeting demand: 'At Bristol, the success was so great that the Colston Hall had to be taken, as no other place in the city would hold the crowds.'⁵⁵

Although *Sixty Years a Queen* was made for a domestic market it was released at an opportune moment to succeed in the United States.⁵⁶ A generally upward trend for imports in terms of footage was recorded in 1913, spearheaded by the European spectacles *Dante's Inferno* (Francesco Bertolini, Adolfo Padovan and Giuseppe De Liguoro, 1911) and *Queen Elizabeth*.⁵⁷ In August 1912, when the US government brought a suit against the Motion Picture Patents Company under the Sherman Act for exclusive monopolisation of commerce, the American market was perceived as opening a little to foreign imports. In April 1913, the *Bioscope* asserted that it was time to export good product to secure the future of British film in America:

[T]he absolute closing of the door against foreign competition killed, for the time being, all hopes of placing British films on the American market. But that time has long since passed, and the policy of the 'open door' is rapidly developing. Whatever may have happened in the past only confirms our belief that the time has come for the British manufacturer to enter the lists against his American competitors on their own ground.⁵⁸

While it had been Samuelson who had presented the British road shows, it was Barker, with his enthusiasm for transatlantic trade, who took the film to the USA.⁵⁹ Barker maintained his East Coast connection by launching the American distribution at the Astor Hotel ballroom, Times Square, New York on 21 December 1913. Reviewer Louis Reeves Harrison noted that Barker's commentary won over the American audience with his 'decided accent'.⁶⁰ Barker remembered selling the film before it was half over 'for a sum which will make the mouths water of some of today's producers'.⁶¹ On this promotional trip he was accompanied by promoter Edward Laurillard of the New Gallery Kinema, who selected *Sixty Years a Queen* as one of the main films to help establish a sister venue in New York to support the exchange of European and American productions. This enterprise, known as the Anglo-American Film Corporation, was incorporated with American businessman George Lederer, who intended to use the organisation as a platform for exporting his own films into Europe.⁶² The New York Theatre was acquired and *Sixty Years a Queen* showed at this venue in April.

Despite the transatlantic hopes for this exchange of 'high-class' films, the *Variety* review of the screening showed the limitations of this subject in the United States, even in the Anglophile community of New York theatre-goers.⁶³ Citing its lack of appeal for the American audience, *Variety* panned the film. The review was by 'Sime', the pseudonym of Simon J. Silverman, known for coining the motto 'Bury the puff and give me the fact.' In his characteristically brusque style, Sime gave *Sixty Years a Queen* short shrift. He did not find fault with the film's production, recognising the unusually high levels of investment: 'The indications early in the reels were that this film had been very expensively made, almost extravagantly so.'⁶⁴ But Sime felt that the original concept and the chronological structure undermined the storytelling and editing qualities that he associated with a good movie: 'The film is merely the exposition in action of a series of incidents concerning England and Victoria during her royal life. There is no continuity except in the passing of years.'⁶⁵ The critic confessed to leaving after only two or three reels. He felt the film to be inappropriate for America on national grounds, claiming that Victoria for the English was as Napoleon for the French, characters that may be a great draw for their respective colonies and expatriates but of no interest to Americans. 'The *Victoria* film for America should be sent through Canada. It was probably built for England. England and her possessions are where this feature belongs.'⁶⁶

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The US release of *Sixty Years a Queen* showed that such patriotic product was not going to reap box-office success in America and change the fortunes of British cinema in the overseas market, whereas in the territories of the British Empire the film netted an impressive £35,000. Even before the distribution of *Sixty Years a Queen* had run its course, Samuelson was able to position himself as a major film manufacturer. As early as 23 April 1914 the *Bioscope* announced that he had purchased Worton Hall in Isleworth and commenced work on creating a modern studio. On 30 May 1914 he incorporated the Samuelson Film Manufacturing Company Ltd.⁶⁷

With *Sixty Years a Queen* Samuelson and Barker tested a new formula for the long film that would be revisited and renewed in 1918 for *The Life Story of David Lloyd George*. In the earlier film British royalty demonstrated its box-office power to kick-start the inchoate feature film industry, and it was this model that was later adapted for the biographical film of a living British prime minister. On the eve of the First World War, many settled comfortably in the plush seats of the newly opened picture palaces to take in this lengthy pageant of Queen Victoria's life and times, celebrating the supposedly golden days of imperial peace and progress.

NOTES

- 1 May Wynne, *The Life and Reign of Victoria the Good, Produced in Conjunction with the Cinematograph Film 'Sixty Years a Queen': Cinema Books No. 2* (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1913).
- 2 'Our view', *Bioscope* (21 August 1913), p. 553.
- 3 'Faking the coronation: interview with Mr Will G. Barker', *Bioscope* (2 February 1911), p. 9; Presumably the film to which Barker was referring was Georges Méliès's *The Coronation of Edward VII* (1902).
- 4 Julian Wylie, 'Confessions of a star maker: queen to-day and super to-morrow', *Sunday Graphic and Sunday News* (1 January 1933), p. 7.
- 5 Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 30.
- 6 'Death of Emperor Napoleon III of France', *Illustrated London News*, Special Number (undated, 1873).
- 7 'Victoria: Queen and Empress. A Jubilee memorial', *Illustrated London News*, Special Number (13 June 1887); 'Her Majesty's glorious Jubilee 1897: the record number of a record reign', *Illustrated London News*, Record Number (21 June, 1897); 'The life and death of Victoria, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India', *Illustrated London News*, Special Number (30 January 1901).
- 8 BFI Special Collections, London, Brunel Collection, Box 21, Item 2, letter from W. G. Barker to the editor of the *Sunday Dispatch* (undated).

- 9 See Dorothy Thompson, *Queen Victoria: Gender and Power* (London: Virago, 2001), pp. 27–8.
- 10 David Cannadine, ‘The context, performance and meaning of ritual: the British monarchy and “invention of tradition”, c. 1820–1977’, in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 120–39.
- 11 G. B. Samuelson, ‘From 15/- to £100,000 and back to 15/-’, quoted in Harold Dunham and David W. Samuelson, *Bertie: The Life and Times of G. B. Samuelson* (London: Published by the Samuelson Family and available at the BFI National Library, 2005), p. 32.
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 ‘The filming of *Henry VIII*: a wonderful spectacle’, *Bioscope* (16 February 1911), p. 5.
- 14 ‘My view of things’, *Bioscope* (24 November 1910), p. 7; ‘The filming of *Henry VIII*’, pp. 5–7.
- 15 ‘The Bioscope at home: the wide-awakeness of Ealing’s “Sleepy Hollow”’, *Middlesex County Times* (10 September 1910), p. 6.
- 16 Samuelson, ‘From 15/- to £100,000 and back to 15/-’, p. 33.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 Charles F. Ingram, ‘Film gossip’, *Illustrated Films Monthly* 1 (September 1913–February 1914), p. 210.
- 19 ‘The picture pianist’, *Bioscope* (13 November 1913), p. 615.
- 20 ‘The Bioscope at home’, p. 6.
- 21 ‘Ealing’s cinematograph masterpiece – how *Sixty Years a Queen* was produced’, *Middlesex County Times* (17 January 1914), p. 2.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 Wynne, *The Life and Reign of Victoria the Good*, p. 33.
- 24 ‘Ealing’s cinematograph masterpiece’, p. 2.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 ‘*Sixty Years a Queen*’, *Picturegoer* (3 January 1914), pp. 392–3.
- 28 ‘Ealing’s cinematograph masterpiece’, p. 2.
- 29 ‘Northern notes’, *Bioscope* (23 April 1914), p. 431; ‘Edinburgh and Paisley notes’, *Bioscope* (29 January 1914), p. 451; ‘Northern notes’, *Bioscope* (30 April 1914), p. 485; ‘Bits from Bedford’, *Bioscope* (22 January 1914), p. 308.
- 30 ‘Nottingham and district notes’, *Bioscope* (29 January 1914), p. 417.
- 31 ‘Teesside topics’, *Bioscope* (12 March 1914), p. 107.
- 32 ‘Welsh notes’, *Kinematograph and Lantern Weekly* (1 January 1914), p. 30; ‘Edinburgh and Paisley notes’, p. 451.
- 33 ‘Our view’, p. 553.
- 34 ‘Trawlings from Grimsby’, *Bioscope* (29 January 1914), p. 417.
- 35 ‘Snippets from Southport’, *Bioscope* (8 January 1914), p. 148.
- 36 ‘Cinema in the Corn Exchange’, *Alnwick and County Gazette* (14 March 1914), p. 5.

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- 37 'Sixty Years a Queen: a very remarkable film illustrating the long reign of Queen Victoria', *The Cinema* (6 November 1913), p. 70.
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