Renewing imperial ties: *The Queen in Australia*

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'The Southern Cross has vanished in the dawn. Over the city of Sydney, the brilliance of a summer's day has broken. It is the third of February 1954. A day of high summer – and of high history for Australia.'

So opens the narration of the Australian government film *The Queen in Australia* (1954), describing the triumphal entrance into Sydney Harbor of the recently crowned Queen Elizabeth II. For the first ascendant monarch bearing the title of head of the Commonwealth, the grand tour of 1953–54 is best understood as a new Commonwealth progress, 'the like of which had never previously been seen', as Winston Churchill announced to the House of Commons.¹ This tour marked the 'apogee of the Windsor Monarchy's world repute' following soon after the coronation and the Commonwealth conquest of Everest, an event broadly reported as a royal tribute.² These events bracket a period of Commonwealth optimism, a temporary pause between the imperial 'implosions' of the late 1940s (the independence of India, Pakistan, Ceylon/Sri Lanka and Burma) and the next round of Empire-diminishing events (e.g. Suez in 1956–57, followed by African decolonisation starting in the early 1960s).³

It had been a long wait for this first visit to Australia by a ruling monarch, a tour delayed twice by those factors – her father George VI's illness and death – that led to Elizabeth's accession to the throne in 1952.⁴ This patience was well rewarded: the fifty-seven-day Australian leg was the longest stopover of this longest-ever royal progress. The party crisscrossed Australia by car, train, plane and ship, visiting seventy country towns as well as capital cities, and along the way making a hundred speeches.⁵ The film commentary attributing to Elizabeth's arrival the dawning of the day is entirely consonant with the hyperbolic royal discourse of the time: memorialisation started before the tour with the sale of scrapbooks for souvenirs. Commentators exhausted stocks of superlatives in

20 An Elizabethan progress: poster for *The Queen in Australia* (produced by Stanley Hawes, 1954).

attempting to convey the tour's magnificence and the sincerity of the waving and cheering crowd's celebration. An estimated 75 per cent of the population came to see the Queen, filling stadia, lining city streets and assembling in remarkable numbers at remote whistle-stops during Australia's so-called 'royal summer'.⁶

Departing in November 1953, the royal party travelled first to Bermuda, Jamaica and Panama before sailing to the Pacific. The Pacific stops commenced in the 'friendly isles' of Tonga with a side trip to the Crown Colony of Fiji,

followed by the longer-stay visits in the settler nations of Aotearoa-New Zealand and finally Australia (from February to April).⁷ On the westward return, the party dropped in at the Cocoas Islands, a private fiefdom granted in perpetuity to the Clunies-Ross family by Queen Victoria, before sailing to the newly independent Sri Lanka.⁸

This was a tour that repurposed the British Crown, from head of Empire to head of a multiracial family of nations. Gratified to be amongst the chosen and alert to possibilities for their own touristic exposure, the sites on the route furnished an exotic global backdrop for royal dramaturgy. Venues and events were prepared for a year in advance. In Suva the 'enterprising officer of the public works Department' who cheaply and cunningly disguised unsightly damage from a recent cyclone and drought was awarded with a 'Royal Victorian Order Medal for this outstanding service'.⁹ In this way the massive costs were defrayed by the host sites: The small colony of Fiji spent over £20,000, while Australia contributed £A200,000 to the refit of the *Gothic* alone and more than £A310,000 for the tour itself.¹⁰ These costs included subsidising the large international – though effectively British – press contingent, with the Australian government covering their transport, communication needs and accommodation.

While maintaining a consistent public welcome required extensive preparation and negotiation, and more complex behind-the-scenes manoeuvring in some more sensitive locations (such as Ceylon and Gibraltar), the Pacific itinerary virtually guaranteed warm royal welcomes, and underlined deep and diverse historical ties: in Fiji and again in Cairns, for example, the Queen dined with descendants of the *Bounty* mutineers; visiting Queen Sālote in Tonga, she was photographed with a turtle that was once Captain Cook's pet.¹¹ In her Christmas broadcast from Gisborne, New Zealand, she simply said: 'I find myself completely and most happily at home.'¹²

The young mother was an exemplary vehicle in which to condense messages about continuity as well as postwar restoration and renewal. The tour's rituals and speeches enacted a 'new' commonwealth semiosphere. This reimagining foregrounded the ties of 'affection and loyalty' binding territories to Britain, ties formed by sovereignties freely ceding to Empire, in order to shelter under the protection of democratic Westminster practices. Though her patrimony, youth and fertility, Elizabeth combined tradition and a promise of the new, the 'every-day' femininity of wife and mother, and that of fairy-tale princess privilege. She was, at once, Queen of the 'free world' of Commonwealth and of Empire, and she came bringing messages of unity in 'troubled times'.¹³

This chapter concerns the interactions of the tour and national public communications agencies in the production of messages of loyalty and unity, examining both what was at stake in securing signs of loyalty in the Pacific, and the way that Australian cultural producers imagined and depicted social unity in this transitional historical period. It focuses on the prestige government film, *The Queen in Australia* – the first feature-length colour documentary made in Australia, and a project representing the public relations ‘opportunity ... of the century’.¹⁴

REBRANDING THE COMMONWEALTH IN THE PACIFIC

Legislatively, the ‘new commonwealth’ came into being in the interests of securing an ongoing relationship with independent India. It was a means to retain a monarch as head of a multiracial family – ‘a worldwide brotherhood of nations’ with republican members.¹⁵ This shift anticipated broader waves of decolonisation, from which inclusion in the British Commonwealth would buffer newly independent member states, particularly against the ‘political encroachment of communism’.¹⁶ Relations within the British Commonwealth at this time were radial, with London at the hub: the Commonwealth association was a means for Britain to maintain central influence despite its waning power. While the new commonwealth implicitly acknowledged such change, Britain also sought to reassert its colonial power in the 1950s, seeking not just to ‘hold the line’ at the current losses, but to ‘revitalize its empire by reestablishing its moral authority and economic and strategic interests as a Great Power’.¹⁷

As Simon Firth demonstrates, the partial and/or incomplete outcomes of decolonisation in the Pacific suggest that the term better describes a historical period of international political enthusiasm, rather than any standard political process. In Australia and Aotearoa-New Zealand, decolonisation continues into present-day struggles over Indigenous land rights and treaty obligations for example, while international enthusiasm has passed over secessionist struggles in West Papua in favour of appeasing post-colonial Indonesia.¹⁸

The formal processes granting independence largely took place in a later wave than most African states; Fiji and Tonga in 1970, and the Australian Territory of Papua, and Trust Territory of New Guinea, in 1975 (hereafter TPNG). However, after the Second World War, as Priya Jaikumar notes, ‘colonialism had become embarrassing’.¹⁹ Continuing to hold colonial possessions, and administering populations of dispossessed and disenfranchised peoples within colonial

settler nations under race-based and discriminatory regulation, were areas of vulnerability in the Western alliance's self-presentation as the lands of the free. Evidence for this claim abounds in the records of the Australian Department of Territories, where policy delays and missteps are decried as providing opportunities for the Soviets to embarrass Australia at the United Nations.²⁰

The tour's Pacific itinerary risked little in terms of embarrassing anti-colonial unrest: the government history of the royal visit to Fiji makes the point:

Fiji seldom attracts the attention of the overseas press. ... It is a peaceful Crown Colony not yet associated with any of the topical colonial demands for constitutional reform or national self-determination, and not producing alarming reports of racial strife, economic distress, communist infiltration, or threats against the established order of government.²¹

However, Chinese and Indian indentured labourers (and descendants in Singapore and Malaya as well as Fiji), were influenced by anti-colonial movements in erstwhile homelands, and South East Asia was far from peaceful.²² The Dutch withdrawal from Indonesia in 1949 (after recolonising attempts were rebuffed by nationalist forces) had left unresolved the status of West Papua, which for the first part of the 1950s remained as Dutch New Guinea. The French withdrawal from Indochina in 1954, along with threats to British rule in Malaya and Singapore, threatened to isolate white Australia, facing a future without the 'security blanket' of British military backup.²³ Anti-communist conservative Prime Minister of Australia, Robert Menzies, was generally considered unsympathetic to the aspirations of Asian nationalists.²⁴ Christopher Waters notes that Australian politicians more broadly were swimming defensively and fruitlessly 'against the tide' of postwar decolonisation throughout the turbulent 1960s and even into the early 1970s.²⁵

Charged with communicating state policy, government information offices were in some instances deployed in managing adverse commentary on colonial policy and conduct. In the early 1950s, the Australian film division, for example, was commissioned to produce a series of reporting films justifying developmental policies and showing progress, and hurdles to progress, in TPNG, during a time when independence was imagined as an event for a still-distant future.²⁶ Stanley Hawes, producer-in-chief of the Australia government film unit and producer of *The Queen in Australia*, prepared a report in 1950 for the Malayan film unit, to ready it to produce propaganda films aimed at persuading Chinese communist rebels to renounce their armed independence struggle.²⁷

By virtue of its public service restructures, the Australian film unit has had many names, but was at this time one of the divisions in the Australian News and Information Bureau (NIB), whose services also included 'Editorial' (print productions), an international film distribution service with primary hubs in London and New York and the supply of information officers to selected international trade posts and embassies that were proliferating as part of Australia's increasingly independent approach to foreign policy. The new bureau's responsibilities included making Australia better and more favourably known internationally: to this end the division negotiated commercial exhibition for major productions where possible, and also supplied 16mm films to various cohorts of 'opinion leaders' (such as diplomatic circles and universities), as well as to schools and community groups.²⁸

Simon Potter notes a broad pattern of institutionalised inter-connection in the Commonwealth media/information field that played a role 'in sustaining a sense of Britishness around the empire' into the 1950s.²⁹ With informal and formal networks of staff training and exchange, such information services can be loosely considered as part of a shared imperial/Commonwealth apparatus, with film agencies owing varying debts to the British Documentary Movement (hereafter BDM) and the advocacy of influential key figure John Grierson, an 'institutional entrepreneur on behalf of documentary'.³⁰ In the Australian film unit Grierson's influence was directly felt though the recruitment of the British producer-in-chief Stanley Hawes, who had worked with Grierson at the Canadian Film Board during the war. Before the war, Hawes had Grierson's support in seeking entry into British documentary circles, and he remained throughout his career a 'Grierson man'. *The Queen in Australia* is best understood as homage to Grierson, in its conception, style and mode of production, as well as in its world-view.³¹

Scholarly accounts of this period in the film unit tend to focus on the 'political and stylistic orthodoxy' of output from this key cultural institution during a historical period of conservative hegemony from 1953 into the mid-1960s.³² During this time hostile restructures diminished the status and independence of the film division, corralling it to the service of government ministers and removing its capacity to initiate its own production under the guidance of a national board independent of the public service hierarchy.³³ This hostility was focused primarily on concerns that the film division harboured communists and fellow-travellers (including amongst the crew making *The Queen in Australia*), raising issues about its fitness for the government's purposes. The government

also was sympathetic to the rival claims of the commercial sector.³⁴ Yet despite three reviews in this decade, the government largely maintained the film division's budget and staff.

Hawes accused the government of 'reducing Government film production to mediocrity by masterly indecision'.³⁵ But from its own deliberations, it would seem that primary stake-holding ministries in the mid-1950s (Territories, External Affairs and Migration) were quite clear in wanting a film information *service department*, not one producing art documentary auspiced by an independent board.³⁶ Such concerns were not purely localised: Grierson complained of a similar diminution in the UK, writing to Hawes that 'The grand old principle, which we have done so much to establish, of having overall national themes and integrating to that end the demands of the departments disappeared from policy and procedure.'³⁷ Ian Aiken notes a disinclination in the Hong Kong Film Unit to employ 'Griersonians' as they were thought to be inappropriately committed to the craft of film, which, along with their liberal impulses, reduced their fitness for the kind of instrumental and budget filmmaking desired by the Colonial Office and local administration.³⁸

Moreover, these reviews were also responses to the broader changing priorities and contexts for government information policy. While investigations into the Australian film and print divisions/units were driven by local budgetary, structural and productivity concerns, they mirror to some extent ongoing policy adjustment in Britain in view of the growing costs of servicing overseas information needs and their strategic significance in international relations. In sensitive information-alliance meetings held with New Zealand, Britain and the US 1958–59, it was acknowledged that 'anti-colonial sentiment' in South East Asia brought together a community of discontent, and these nations were united in their goal of keeping South East Asia out the 'Sino-Soviet orbit'.³⁹ Meetings prepared extensive wish-lists of issues on which Asians needed to have their views clarified, such as on the Western role of bringing 'peace and stability' to the region, and that association with the West 'does not mean domination by it'.⁴⁰

During the 1950s then, Anglo-sphere political interests were aligned in approaching decolonisation though a Cold War lens, and in investing in informational strategies as part of the arsenal of the struggle for decolonising 'hearts and minds'. Promoting a racially inclusive and egalitarian Commonwealth was one approach to countering hostile anti-colonial alliances. In his concluding report, Australian press relations officer Oliver Hogue concludes that the royal tour 'has been a significant indication to the world of the unity of the peoples

of the Commonwealth of nations'.⁴¹ Subsequent hopes for the international influence of a film distilling such a potent expression of Commonwealth loyalty were similarly tied up in Cold War rhetoric. While a Glasgow newspaper review's claims that 'if *The Queen in Australia* could be thrown on the inside of the Iron Curtain for a week, future conferences might shape up very differently' may seem absurdly zealous in hindsight, similar hopes are found throughout the NIB's files on the film's distribution, for example in Hawes's views that the film would not only serve to make Australia better known in Asia, but be of particular value in the anti-communist 'psychological campaign' in Malaya.⁴²

PRODUCTION

Hawes unwaveringly believed in the progressive role of documentary film in a civic education project tailored to the needs of complex modern societies, and there is no sign that this view changed over the long years of his tenure as producer-in-chief (1946–69). He held also to Grierson's view that information service is 'not simply ancillary to other activities of government':

It is the chosen instrument by which a nation gives account of its stewardship. It is the instrument through which it secures the co-operation of the people to national and international ends. It is the instrument by which a nation contributes to the international pool of understanding in matters of common interest.⁴³

The unit, then, also had a considerable stake in the success of this project, and ambitions set aloft by the loosening of standard budgetary parsimony.⁴⁴ Hawes aimed to have *The Queen in Australia* completed for the monarch's return home in May – a tight deadline also reflecting his need to get the film into distribution before the tour had faded from public memory.⁴⁵ As the 35mm Ferrania colour stock could not be processed in Australia, he decided to manage the shoot and postproduction from London, a plan that also allowed him to work with former BDM colleagues. He communicated with the crew in the field – who were working without any other feedback – by cable and letter. In this and every other respect this was an epic production.

Hawes was determined that in its artistry and efficiency the film would showcase Australian creative talent (for example, in the original music and lyrical script), as well as the unit's production competence (such as in planning and communications), and technical expertise. In a more minor key, artistry

would showcase Commonwealth ties. The bulk of the film spend was to be in Australia with only 'unavoidable editing and recording expenses' to be incurred in the UK, where Hawes could also access a pool of Australian creative talent – he later estimated that as many Australians worked on the film in London as did in Australia.⁴⁶

Pre-planning included reconnaissance of key locations, with some preliminary shooting taking place some four months before the tour started, after which Hawes wrote a 'prescript'. The very stuff of this protracted progress – ritual reiterations of parliamentary openings and so on that symbolically united the disparate sites visited – resisted interesting treatment. Further, Hawes quite rightly was concerned that the cycle of Commonwealth royal progress films around this time, along with the New Zealand film unit production that would precede his, risked market saturation. These included the *Royal Tour of South Africa* (1947), the *Royal Tour of Canada* (1951) both made when Elizabeth was still a princess, along with *A Queen is Crowned* (1953).⁴⁷

Hawes decided to order his film thematically, to avoid repeating the chronological approach of these others, and sought script assistance from BDM alumnus Stuart Legg for his 'expertise on the Commonwealth'.⁴⁸ Written by Australians Tom Hungerford and George Johnston, as well as the British author Laurie Lee, the script was to be merged and polished by Legg. In January Legg wrote:

My hunch is to point the cameras as much at what the Queen sees (and through that, to the perspective of the country beyond) as at the Queen herself. 'Australia on Parade' – happy, laughing, humorous, and good-humoured, gusty, excited and exciting. Wonderful faces, places. Plenty of candid close-ups. The U.K., as ever, is ignorant of the Commonwealth of which it is a member: and if you made real rip-roaring, lovable picture about Australia and Australians – about the spirit the Queen sensed but could not see – you might not just wake people up a bit here and make them cry, but have a pretty saleable commodity as well.⁴⁹

While nowhere mentioned, this 'portrait of a nation' approach is close to that taken in the Canadian film. Fortuitously it also lent creative and national credibility to what turned out to be a practical approach to logistical challenges. Even at the planning stage Hawes admitted that 'sequences which I had relied on to give some human interest are collapsing one by one'.⁵⁰

Although the film crew were making the *official* film, their access was under the jurisdiction of state and municipal bodies: senior cameraman Jack Allan

complained 'All sorts of things keep cropping up which did not exist when you and I traveled around together and at nearly every function we got to there is some little tin-pot dictator for the day who just has to wield his authority.'⁵¹ In London, Hawes received continuous exculpatory accounts from the men in the field about the errors, misadventures and even outright deception (on the part of civic bodies determined to be included) that undermined well-laid plans for interesting footage.⁵² Spontaneous moments were missed because of the time taken for setting up bulky cameras, and casual, humorous or intimate footage of the Queen proved impossible in light of royal protocols and priorities. Even formal occasions were often difficult: the Queen disliked the intrusion of glaring lights and often favoured interactions with the public over camera exposure. The head of the NIB concluded that the Queen's press secretary, Commander Richard Conville, failed to understand the need to 'promote' the Queen as well as protect her. Negotiations with Conville broke down so completely that the crew took to setting up dummy cameras to misdirect 'the man with the built-in sneer'.⁵³

Nevertheless, on completing, Hawes was content with the balance and fit between nation and Crown saying, 'it has emerged, as I planned it, as a film not only of the Royal couple, but of Australia itself and of the people of the country'.⁵⁴

PRODUCING SETTLER SPACE AND TIME IN
THE QUEEN IN AUSTRALIA

A structuring convention in BDM films addressing social issues is explaining their improvement through some policy or innovation. While Ian Aiken considers British interwar documentary as a movement of genuine social reform, Brian Winston has critiqued the 'social amelioration' film as enacting a flight from their own social meanings in its foreclosing on investigation or critique.⁵⁵ Hawes's calling-card film for the Australian unit, *School in the Mailbox* (1947), exemplifies the approach: It explains the isolation of rural children, and demonstrates the improving role of the correspondence school, with an educative account of how the component parts operate to fit or incorporate the isolated outback family into the operationally inclusive and improving whole of the nation. It is a neat, disciplined and well-received project, that also bears out colleague Ron Maslyn Williams's account of the impact of 'English training. They were all going to reform the world, make it better by showing how things worked, how a workman [for example] was part of whole state machinery'.⁵⁶

The royal tour film was a far messier and grander project than *School in the Mailbox* logistically and ideologically, but motivated by the same spirit of 'propaganda for good'. While, as would be expected in a record of national celebration, the narrative avoids social problems, nevertheless the history, character and future of the nation organise the film's discourse, in a project that came with its own ready-made 'amelioration', that is, the Queen and all she conveyed about collective belonging. While 'unity in diversity' was a key theme associated with the tour, many commentators have understood this in national rather than broader Commonwealth terms. Ewan Morris, for example, considers that the tour's popularity is better understood as escapist entertainment, and the Queen as national surrogate, 'the visible sign of nation', such that loyal crowds who comprised the nation were cheering and celebrating themselves. In a similar vein, Ina Bertrand notes in the division's film, the 'daring ... lack of pomp' and emphasis on ordinary people's experience of the tour.⁵⁷

In various talks and papers, Hawes accorded documentary a special capacity for revealing meanings 'beneath the surface of things'. In this homage to Grierson, Hawes enacts BDM ideas about documentary as a kind of social technology to the extent that it not only reflects, but putatively enacts the unities of the settler nation.

Morris claims that in the tour, Aborigines and external territory subjects were given 'star billing as model loyal citizens as [they were] the least assimilated groups' and thus required the most work to make them appear part of the 'big happy family'.⁵⁸ If this visibility is true of the tour generally, it does not carry over into the film. The film division had done little work about Aboriginal peoples, and none specifically for them, or about intercultural contact.⁵⁹ Those Hawes calls 'original Australians' in his script needed to be fitted into orderly relations in the national narrative – the 'original', the 'new' (those non-British European migrants sought in increasing numbers after the war) and the Australians without modifiers, i.e. British settlers. Aside from any other role in the national narrative, he needed the Indigenous population to visually enact Australia's distinctiveness:

The touchstone selected as the test of whether a sequence should be eliminated or drastically reduced ... was whether the events included in any particular sequence were distinctively Australian. By this test sequences like the Flying Doctor, Bondi Surf Carnival, the children's display, the dance of the Torres Strait Islanders, and so on, were selected for the full treatment; while Garden Parties, Universities, Ballet, Women's organizations ... which ... could be seen in other countries, were regretfully given scanty treatment.⁶⁰

Grierson's approach to 'representative typicality' shapes this strategy. Echoing Winston, Anna Grimshaw complains that BDM 'films appear to be about people and yet we encounter types ... they are located in the modern world and yet deny both history and politics'.⁶¹ The denial in this case concerns the film's indifference to the racial politics of its national assemblage, in the face of much countervailing evidence encountered in the production. Hawes, for example, requested an image of an Indigenous stockman for one of the film's national montages and was told from the field: 'You may miss out on the aborigines [*sic*] listening at the homestead, as ... they will not employ them when they have to pay them the same money as white stockmen.'⁶²

The dependence on demotic Indigenous cultural signs to index Australian settler distinctiveness is far more extensive in the film than the outline of key events suggests.⁶³ Appropriated signs abound in the footage: from the giant boomerang archway under which the cavalcade pass in Sydney to the all-white Australian Ballet royal performance of *Corroboree*, composed by John Anthill, whose works also feature in the film, and performed in blackface. Those few Indigenous Australians who are featured are always performing their difference – by throwing boomerangs or dancing. A popular shot in royal reportage generally is that of crowds improvising viewing positions – climbing trees, flagpoles or onto roofs to catch a royal glimpse. Such modest disorder indexes loyal and spontaneous enthusiasm, but not one such crowd shot includes an Indigenous Australian. This is assimilative appropriation – where Aboriginal Australians are evacuated from the incidental or natural landscapes of the film – Australia as *terra nullius* – yet everywhere visible in these contained registers. This fraught interplay of dependency and disavowal is part of settler colonialism's ongoing cultural labour, in reproducing and tweaking racial constructs to ensure the 'reproduction of historical relations into the present'.⁶⁴

The commentary accompanying the themes stitches together the building blocks of tour films – laying of wreaths, planting of trees, openings and command attendances, tours of inspection, review and admiration, with the narrative threads of emergent nationhood made from interlocking tropes of modernity (such as the rocket range), development ('wresting increase' from a quiescent land) and the human assemblage of assimilation. This combination generates the film's 'chronotope', its construction of the 'intrinsic connectedness' of space and time, as Mikhail Bakhtin notes.⁶⁵ Opening in the east-coast morning and closing in the west-coast evening at Fremantle, the film moulds space to the movements of time and plot, creating a history of the present of the settler nation.⁶⁶

The tour covered 10,000 miles, and the crew generated close to 60,000 feet of footage – of which Hawes was able to use less than 10 per cent.⁶⁷ This compression further concentrates events that were themselves densely symbolic and finely calibrated. To give tighter coherence to the overlapping and exceeded themes, he bookends the film chronologically in the commentary, and this day-in-the-life device slows time, thickening the fifty-seven consecrated days of the royal summer, in this layered temporality. The structural conceit of paused time is reiterated through various aural and visual devices, such as a moment of anticipatory quiet before the explosion of maritime horns, toots and whistles that welcome the *Gothic* into Sydney harbour. Then leading into the words of welcome from the Lord Mayor and Prime Minister are the words of the commentary which accompanies a welcoming scenic introductory montage:

They [those welcoming the Queen] speak for giant Queensland beneath its Capricorn skies; for Victoria where channel, dam and sluice have wrested increase from the tawny soil. They speak for a continent amongst the oldest in its being, amongst the freshest and most fruitful in its modern doing. ... They speak above all for a new nation, flexing its muscles, filling its spaces, inheriting its own.

Nowhere in the film is the settler chronotope stated more explicitly than in this cultural construction of colonialism as divine ‘destiny’, where the quiescent ancient land awaits for modernising energy of the settler.⁶⁸ The scale of the opening crowd scenes, along with distant geographic reaches of the montage, demonstrates the extent to which the ‘small band of Englishmen’ who first settled in Sydney have gone forth to multiply.

This emphatic settler discourse distinguishes the Australia tour from other Pacific sites destinations, including Aotearoa-New Zealand. A partial exception, which is one of the most successful sequences, takes place in northern Queensland. Cameraman Jack Allan wrote to Hawes: ‘Touching on Cairns – Undoubtedly this is going to be one of highlights of your film so start cheering’:

David Eastman flew up to Cairns ... and ... selected a little unpainted weath-erboard house, whose owner had a wife, some kids and a battered old car. David gave them a balloon and some flags and shot a nice sequence of them leaving to go to see the Queen. Next he buried the car deep in the jungle and had it come crashing through the very thick undergrowth out on to the road where our party drives past a magnificent field of cane with some beautiful mountain scenery in the background ... undoubtedly the best part will be

the Torres Strait Islanders as all their rehearsal was shot in close up ... [we] shot the whole sequence of this very interesting re-enactment of Torres Strait Islands' history. I have never seen H.M. more animated or interested, and even blasé me got a kick out of these fellows; they were truly magnificent.⁶⁹

The vectors converging in this scene – settler, Islander, colonial Crown – provide the moment in the film that comes closest to acknowledging the Pacific location of settler Australia. Arriving at the helm of a pearling lugger, the Islanders seem to be free agents of their own voyage, although they 'lived under the rigid control of a government-appointed Protector and ... were required to obtain permits to visit the mainland or to travel within the islands'.⁷⁰ Their dance points to a time before and outside settler time, but even in this far-north location, the performance remains touristic spectacle, with no Islanders or mainland Indigenous peoples visible among the watching crowds.

Following the dance are a few seconds of the Queen and Duke moving down a line of delegates from Australian territories. These men were the chosen representatives of Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, and architect of Australia's assimilation policy.⁷¹ Hasluck set the 'appropriate' level of territories' peoples to meet the Queen – this is the wording of his report – and arranged the writing of their vows of loyalty.⁷² Of the Northern Territory (NT) party of eight, six were white Australians – the administration and two 'pioneering couples' – along with 'two outstanding aborigines' [*sic*]. One of these was the self-taught landscape artist Albert Namatjira. His granddaughter later reported that 'Albert ... didn't really speak to her at all. Back then, she gave him a medal and he quickly walked away'.⁷³ In a play about Namatjira's life written and performed by his family, the Queen figures as a remote, quaint icon of an alien empire, immeasurably divorced from the imposed assimilation that blighted Indigenous lives.⁷⁴

In Cairns, in remote north Queensland, the Minister arranged a two-day visit for a larger delegation.⁷⁵ This group – again all men – was chosen for its leadership in driving development policies and/or loyal war service. The travel notes of Ron Williams give some indication of what the visit signified for Simagun, one of the delegates whom Williams met when researching his film series for the Department of Territories. Simagun was nominated member of the TPNG legislative council (an early structure in the territories' guided political development), an ex-coast watcher and member of the constabulary.

Williams first describes his surprise at seeing Simagun 'lounging at ease across the table from the district officer ... probably the only native to sit in

a European's office in the Territory'. He was a small business entrepreneur – running a truck business and sluicing for gold, and, unusually, he owned a rifle and used cigarette papers rather than newspaper. Despite this relative affluence, he could not afford to live in the capital, Port Moresby (which is the location of the legislative council on which he sat). The story about this trip that Simagun related on two separate occasions to Williams concerns a night of drinking with Namatjira, where Simagun said he demonstrated the greater stamina of his race.⁷⁶ This fleeting connection occurred in the face of their mutual subjection. At this time both were subject to protectionist racial modes of legislation that mandated the forms of development to be attained in order to achieve citizenship: in TPNG policies for social, economic and political development aimed to prepare and equip subject peoples for their future place in the world; in the NT, the benchmarks were personal. Aborigines in the NT had almost without exclusion become wards of the state under the 1953 welfare ordinance. Wardship would be revoked, 'in the case of individuals whom the authorities deemed capable of managing their own affairs', entitling full citizenship rights.⁷⁷ At this time Namatjira was a ward of state, and Simagun was 'legally incompetent', a citizen of neither TPNG nor Australia, and his Australian tour was exceptional. Soon after this visit, Namatjira was granted citizenship, which was later revoked when he was imprisoned for the crime of supplying alcohol to other wards.⁷⁸

Williams's travel notes contain this paraphrased translation of what Simagun discerned from his royal visit:

Some of us believe that the spirits will bring European goods to us in ships and planes. I myself believed this at one time but now I know that this is not true ... you know ... when I visited Australia what I saw there was very different from what I expected to see. I found that a man who did not work did not eat ... unless we work hard too and listen carefully to the agricultural officer ... our children might become labourers working for others.⁷⁹

The minister, and Territories administration, may well have found the development goals of the visit achieved by Simagun's substitution of the magical thinking of the 'cargo cult' for a properly modern understanding of the market economy, but been less comfortable with his concerns about the disenfranchisement of his children in a cash economy.

Senior British politicians visited Australia in unprecedented numbers in the months leading up to the tour, concerned to maintain the Commonwealth

character of the so-called 'young' nation in light of postwar development and change. David Lowe recounts the British High Commissioner's hope that the Queen's physical presence would 'provide a strong source of definition for the two groups he identified as central to Australia's future, children and immigrants'.⁸⁰ Postwar fertility is everywhere evident in the film and nineteen events about or for white children were held, including a display in Sydney where massed bodies spelt out loyalty in dance. Yet only two Indigenous children are seen – those whose father demonstrates how to throw a boomerang.

The floral tribute is a privileged moment in the progress, and late colonial sentiment is finely calibrated in the discursive distinctions and local inflections attending this ritual renewal of ties across the Pacific. The obeisance of flower girls is linked to royal renewal though the elaborate coronation dress, which accompanied Elizabeth on tour and was worn to open various parliaments. It was stitched with floral motifs forming 'an atlas of the Queen's realms [with] flowers of the eleven Commonwealth countries ... intertwined in a floral garland, each flower or leaf nestling around the Tudor rose'.⁸¹ Floral tributes from the Commonwealth's most youthful actualise these atlas embroideries, figuring submission in innocence. For little settler girls in Australia – mostly daughters of civic dignitaries – being a flower girl was a moment of fleeting celebrity, a chance to 'participate in a dream ... of a fairy tale Queen come to life' in the words of the *Women's Weekly*.⁸² Hawes's prescript mentions an Indigenous flower girl, but she does not eventuate in the film, visually playing out Indigenous assimilation into white culture. Mirroring these gestures are the wreaths everywhere laid for the fallen, creating a life-cycle of gendered Commonwealth service. The analogue of the genuflecting girl is the ever-helpful boy scout 'ready with a pair of hands' to plant trees after a preliminary spade or two by the Duke.

CONCLUSION

When the *Gothic* finally set sail from Fremantle, no one cheered louder than the hard-worked official film crew, each of whom received the royal commemorative medal given to those members of the press who lasted four states or more.⁸³ Neither the scale of nor the widespread national enthusiasm for the 1954 tour was to be repeated in Australia, and in this light the tour has been described as a 'last gasp of empire'. Staging and producing such an extended royal show exhausted audience attention, too, and Hawes – still tied up in postproduction in London – was told by one of his

correspondents 'now that the Queen is on her way home she seems practically to have slipped out of public consciousness. ... Sydney is talking of the Petrov affair and nothing else.'⁸⁴

Released by May the film was highly praised within government and commercial circles. The Head of Information at the Commonwealth Relations Office declared it the 'very best thing I have ever seen in the true interests of Commonwealth'.⁸⁵ It is a film, as Hawes wrote to Grierson, that bears out the Griersonian 'grand scheme', marrying tourist and migration promotion to a story of modern nation-within-Commonwealth, presenting a mythic history of the present, wherein a harmonious white community confidently defines the space and time of the nation, and basks in the Crown's reflected glory. This is not a film about an Australia of Asia or the Pacific: As Hawes wrote about its opening: 'the cross section of the country has some very lovely material in it. It makes Australians want to go home, and makes the English want to emigrate.'⁸⁶ Australia's internal colonisation and Pacific imperialism are as marginal as it is possible to imagine in the national story, and in this way the film signals forthcoming Australian antipathy to the multi-racial hues of the new Commonwealth. I leave the last words to the US reviewer who aptly describes the film as 'an expanded love story ... between a new sovereign and a new people in an old and durable political arrangement'.⁸⁷

NOTES

- 1 'Royal Tour: nothing like it in history says Churchill', *Fiji Times and Herald* (13 November 1954), p. 1.
- 2 Ben Pimlott, in Klaus Dodds, David Lambert and Bridget Robison, 'Loyalty and royalty: Gibraltar, the 1953–54 Royal Tour and the geopolitics of the Iberian Peninsula', *Twentieth Century British History* 18:3 (2007), p. 375; Peter Hansen, 'Coronation Everest', in Stuart Ward (ed.), *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001).
- 3 John MacKenzie, 'The persistence of empire in metropolitan culture', in Ward (ed.), *British Culture*.
- 4 Australian royal visits proposed for 1949 and early 1952 were cancelled on account of the ill health of George VI, and a substitute planned visit by Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip in 1952 was cancelled during an early stage in its itinerary following the King's death. Kate Cumming, *Royalty and Australian Society: Records Relating to the British Monarchy Held in Canberra* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1998), p. 112.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

- 6 National Film and Sound Archive, Canberra, Stanley Hawes collection (hereafter SHC), box 5, *The Queen in Australia* script.
- 7 The map of the tour published in accounts such as that of the Fijian government shows the Queen travelling from Fiji to Tonga: the dates above are sourced from government information office plans suggesting an unreported change; it is unclear which version is definitive. See National Archives of Australia, Canberra (hereafter NAA), A9711 PRO 39, Royal visit Fiji and Tonga.
- 8 NAA, A1838, 555/10/1, Publicity royal tour, 1954.
- 9 J. W. Sykes, *Royal Visit 1953* (Suva: Government Printing and Stationary Department, 1954).
- 10 NAA, A6895, N1956/312, News and Information Bureau film production programme.
- 11 In Ceylon, for example, considerable behind-the-scenes correspondence negotiated the balance between respectful observance of Hindu ritual (removing her shoes to enter the temple) and her standing fully shod in Protestant and regal dignity. See The National Archives (United Kingdom), Kew, DO 121/213, Queen's tour of commonwealth countries 1953–1954. She visits Uganda, Tobruk, Malta and Gibraltar on the way back to London, arriving 15 May 1954.
- 12 Kenneth Bourne (ed.), *The Royal Tour of Australia and New Zealand in Pictures* (Melbourne: Herald Gravure Printers for *Herald and Weekly Times*, 1954), unpaginated.
- 13 Such statements are made all along the Pacific route and repeatedly cited, for example in the film script, various newspaper stories and in stories collected in commemorative volumes such as the one cited above.
- 14 SHC, box 9, memo from Kent Hughes, Minister, Department of the Interior, to Hawes, 17 March 1954.
- 15 Peter Marshall, 'Shaping the "New Commonwealth"', *Round Table* 350 (1999), pp. 185–6; Dodds, Lambert and Robison, 'Loyalty and royalty', p. 373.
- 16 Marshall, 'Shaping the "New Commonwealth"', p. 191.
- 17 Caroline Elkins, 'The reassertion of the British Empire in Southeast Asia', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 19:3 (Winter 2009), p. 365; also see David Reynolds, 'Empire region, world: the international context of Australian foreign policy since 1939', *Australian Journal of Politics and History* 51:3 (2005), p. 348.
- 18 Simon Firth, 'The rise and fall of decolonisation in the Pacific', in Donald Denoon (ed.), *Emerging from Empire? Decolonisation in the Pacific* (Canberra: Australian National University, 1997); also see Roger Thompson, *The Pacific Basin since 1945* (London and New York: Longman, 1994).
- 19 Priya Jaikumar, *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain and India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 10.
- 20 See, for example, National Archives of Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby, AN 247, SN 367, FNCA 11/4/1/14, Production of films in the Territory for use by administrative departments, 1950–1953; NAA, A518, 0141/3/1, Films – Papua and New Guinea – Australian Territories Exhibition 1952 – proposed film on Papua and New

- Guinea, 1951–1953; NAA, A452, 61/7890, Production of films recording Australian administration in Papua and New Guinea, 1958–1962.
- 21 Sykes, *Royal Visit 1953*, p. 2.
- 22 See Ali Ahmed, 'Political change, 1874–1960', in Brij Lal (ed.), *Politics in Fiji* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986); Andrea Benvenuti, 'Australia, the "Marshall experiment" and the decolonisation of Singapore 1955–56', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 43 (2012); Frank Cain (ed.), *Menzies in War and Peace* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1997), p. 156.
- 23 David Goldsworthy, *Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain's Empire* (Carlton South, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2002).
- 24 Gregory Pemberton, 'An imperial imagination: explaining the post-1945 foreign policy of Robert Gordon Menzies', in Cain (ed.), *Menzies in War and Peace*, p. 156.
- 25 Christopher Waters, 'Against the tide', *Journal of Pacific History* 48:2 (2013). Some political historians point to the ways in which national politics 'decolonised' (or 'de-dominionised') in relation to Whitehall in the 1950s. In such departures from the compliant agreement still sought by London from its Commonwealth allies, Australia was likely to be even more intractably hostile to decolonising aspirations. See, for example, Reynolds, 'Empire region, world', p. 349.
- 26 Jane Landman, 'Visualising the subject of development: Australian government films made during the trusteeship of New Guinea', *Journal of Pacific History* 45:1 (2010).
- 27 SHC, box 42, Malayan film unit.
- 28 Landman, 'Visualising the subject'.
- 29 Simon Potter, 'Strengthening the bonds of the Commonwealth: the Imperial Relations Trust and Australian, New Zealand and Canadian personnel in Britain 1946–1952', *Media History* 11:3 (2005).
- 30 Albert Moran, *Projecting Australia: Australian Government Film Since 1945* (Sydney: Currency Press, 1991), p. 2; Jo Fox, 'John Grierson, his "Documentary Boys" and the British Ministry of Information 1939–42', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 25:3 (2005).
- 31 Ian Aitken discusses the shifting meanings of "Griersonian" in 'The development of the official film-making in Hong Kong', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 32:4 (2012), pp. 590–1.
- 32 Moran, *Projecting Australia*, pp. 54, 55–80.
- 33 Graham Shirley and Brian Adams, *Australian Cinema: The First Eighty Years* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1983).
- 34 Moran, *Projecting Australia*; David McKnight, 'Australian film and the cultural cold war', *Media International Australia* 111 (May 2004).
- 35 John Grierson Archive, Stirling University (hereafter JGA), GAA, 16:23, letter from Hawes to Grierson, 11 August 1953.
- 36 This account unfolds in the large file on the abolition of the Department of Information and the creation of the NIB: NAA, A65619 (A5619/1), C762.
- 37 JGA, GAA, 16:12, letter from Grierson (UNESCO, Paris) to Hawes, 6 October 1947.

- 38 Ian Aitken, *Film and Reform: John Grierson and the Documentary Film Movement* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); Aitken, 'Development of the official film-making in Hong Kong'.
- 39 NAA, A5619/1, C762, Conference on the co-operation in information activities in South-East Asia Canberra, marked 'Secret', June 1958 and November 1959.
- 40 *Ibid.*
- 41 NAA, A9711PRO, Hogue, undated.
- 42 SHC, box 51, general, review cited in letter, K. Murphy to R. Williams, 28 May 1954; Hawes comments on Asia *ibid.*, report, Hawes to the Director, NIB, 28 May 1954.
- 43 JGA, GAA, 4 21, articles, speeches and broadcasts, pp. 39–45; GAA, 4:21:7, the nature and form of a government information service.
- 44 The film had an initial budget of £A8.000, though further funds were made available. NAA, A6895, N1956/312, NIB Film production programme.
- 45 SHC, box 88, letter from Hawes to Ted Hunter, 17 January 1954.
- 46 SHC, box 51, progress report, April 20 1954; letter from Hawes to Grierson, 10 December 1953.
- 47 All except *A Queen is Crowned* are available online; *A Queen is Crowned* (UK, Rank, 1953); *The Royal Tour New Zealand* (New Zealand National Film Unit, 1954), www.nzonscreen.com/title/royal-tour-1953-54-1954; *The Royal Tour of Tonga* (New Zealand National Film Unit, 1954), www.nzonscreen.com/title/royal-visit-to-the-kingdom-of-tonga-1954; *The Royal Tour of Canada* (Canada, National Film Board, 1952), www.nfb.ca/film/royal_journey.
- 48 SHC, box 51, general, letter from Hawes to Stuart Legg, 21 January 1954.
- 49 SHC, box 51, early correspondence with the film centre (London), letter from Legg to Hawes, 21 January 1954.
- 50 *Ibid.*, letter from Hawes to Legg, 10 January 1954.
- 51 SHC, box 51, general, letter from Jack Allen to Hawes, 16 March 1954.
- 52 *Ibid.*, letter from Allan to Hawes, 16 March 1954.
- 53 *Ibid.*, letter from Allan to Hawes, 17 March 1954.
- 54 *Ibid.*, letter from Hawes to Peter Morrison, editor of *Film Weekly*, 30 April 1954.
- 55 Brian Winston, *Claiming the Real: The Griersonian Documentary and its Legitimisations* (London: BFI, 1995), pp. 37–8; Aitken, *Film and Reform*.
- 56 Cited in Moran, *Projecting Australia*, p. 42.
- 57 Ewan Morris, 'Forty years on: Australia and the Queen, 1954', *Journal of Australian Studies* 4 (1994) p. 13; Ina Bertrand, 'Stanley Hawes: a Grierson man', *Metro* 120 (1999), p. 42.
- 58 Morris, 'Forty years on', p. 6.
- 59 Moran, *Projecting Australia*, p. 39.
- 60 SHC, box 51, general, 'Progress report', 20 April 1954.
- 61 Anna Grimshaw, *The Ethnographer's Eye: Ways of Seeing in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 62.
- 62 SHC, box 51, general, B. Gandy to Hawes, 26 March 1954.

- 63 Zoe Druik, 'International cultural relations as a factor in postwar Canadian cultural policy: the relevance of UNESCO for the Massey Commission, *Canadian Journal of Communication* 32 (2006), p. 189.
- 64 Patrick Wolfe, 'Race and trace of history: for Henry Reynolds', in F. Bateman and L. Pilkington (eds), *Studies in Settler Colonialism: Politics, Identity and Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 289; for a seminal overview of the politics of Indigenous representation, see Marcia Langton, 'Well, I Heard It on the Radio and I Saw It on the Television' (Sydney: Australian Film Commission, 1993).
- 65 David Lowe, '1954: the Queen and Australia in the world', *Journal of Australian Studies* 46 (1995), discusses modernity and technology as development, Moran, *Projecting Australia*, also observes the insistent discourse of development in the film division documentaries.
- 66 Mikhail Bakhtin, 'The dialogic imagination: four essays', trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson, in Pam Morris (ed.), *The Bakhtin Reader* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p. 184.
- 67 SHC, box 51, 'Progress report', April 20 1954.
- 68 Deborah Rose Bird, *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonization* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004), p. 37.
- 69 SCH, box 51, general, letter Allan to Hawes, 16 March, 1954.
- 70 David Lawrence and Helen Reeves Lawrence, 'Torres Strait: the region and its people', in Richard Davis (ed.), *Woven Histories, Dancing Lives: Torres Strait Islander Identity, Culture and History* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2004), p. 27.
- 71 Russell McGregor, 'Wards, words and citizens: A. P. Elkin and Paul Hasluck on assimilation', *Oceania* 69 (1999), p. 243.
- 72 NAA, A9708, RV/Q, Territorial representation.
- 73 Cited at www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/28/my-message-to-queen-elizabeth-ii-aboriginal-art-needs-support.
- 74 *Namatjira*, written by Scott Rankin, created with the Namatjira family, Malthouse Theatre and Big hART, Melbourne, August 2012; *Michael James Manaia*, a Maori biographical play, also references the 1953/54 tour as a moment of cultural alienation and disjunction. *Michael James Manaia*, written by John Broughton, Taki Rua Production, Melbourne 12–28 October 2012.
- 75 In addition to theses delegations, some self-funded groups of scouts also attended. NAA, A9708, RV/Q, Territorial representation.
- 76 National Library of Australia, Canberra, Maslyn Williams Papers (hereafter MWP), MS 3936, box 1, folder 2, travel notes.
- 77 McGregor, 'Wards, words and citizens', p. 243.
- 78 This story is related in the play about his life, also see *ibid*.
- 79 MWP, MS 3936 box I, folder one, travel notes.
- 80 Lowe, '1954: the Queen and Australia in the world', p. 6.

- 81 Peter Trepanier, 'Some visual aspects of the monarchical tradition', *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 27:2 (2004), p. 27.
- 82 'Flowers for a royal lady', *Women's Weekly* (27 January 1954), p. 32.
- 83 SHC, box 51, general, letter, D. Mason to Hawes, 2 April 1954.
- 84 This compelling story concerned the defection of a Soviet embassy staffer and his wife. SHC, Box 51 general, letter from Tom Gurr, Associated Newspapers, Sydney, to Hawes, 9 April 1954.
- 85 SHC, box 51, general, 18 May 1954.
- 86 SHC, box 51 general, letter, Hawes to S. Brown, Canberra, 27 March 1954.
- 87 SHC, box 51, reviews, film review, *Evening Star* (Washington), 24 June 1954.

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